

The Women of Jemaah Tarbiyah: Religion, Democracy, and the In-Between

Raneeta Mutiara

Office of Graduate Studies, Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS), Singapore

Email: raneetamutiara001@suss.edu.sg

How to cite this paper: Mutiara, R. (2023). The Women of Jemaah Tarbiyah: Religion, Democracy, and the In-Between. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 11, 32-46. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2023.117004>

Received: June 1, 2023

Accepted: July 8, 2023

Published: July 11, 2023

Copyright © 2023 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

Jemaah Tarbiyah has been part of religiopolitical movements in Indonesia since the colonial period. Over time, it has become one of Indonesia's most influential Islamist groups, especially for its ability to progress hand in hand with Indonesian democracy. The female faction of this movement deserves much attention as they are provided generous space to express their political interest and to exercise their womanly role in their families and society. The proficiency to step in and out of the movements according to the appropriate time and space places such women as formidable sociopolitical agents in propagating Islamism within a democratic state. Aspects worth examination include self-perception of identity, intrinsic psychological and ideological factors, as well as their sociopolitical tendency. They help understand the key reasons behind the involvement of these women with Jemaah Tarbiyah and how they impact the dynamics of political conservatism in Indonesia.

Keywords

Puritanism, Women, Religiopolitics

1. Introduction

Puritanism is a term commonly associated with ultra-conservatism, which rejects modern, liberal, or progressive re-interpretations of Islam (van Bruinessen, 2013). In Indonesia, puritan movements have long been part of the society, and their teachings have been accepted, embraced, and adapted into the socioreligious demography of the country. Due to its diversity, Indonesia consists of various ethnic and cultural groups, even within the segment of Indonesian Muslims (Azra, 2018). Therefore, every Muslim community has its preference regarding Islamic practice and understanding. This preference is naturally influenced by the social, cultural, political, and economic systems implemented within the

community. The two ever-present major Islamic movements in Indonesia are Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. As a product of the localization of Islam in the archipelago, NU and Muhammadiyah are less puritan than other transnational movements, or so they are understood.

The emergence of transnational puritanism in Indonesia correlates with the development of Islamist movements globally. These movements seek to alter Muslim communities' characteristics from traditionalist to modernist. In order to modernize Islam, individuals and groups must make a genuine effort over a period of time to adapt established Islamic perceptions and practices to new forms of understanding and practice. This may involve reinterpreting thoughts and opinions on Islamic issues and adjusting previous beliefs to align with current times. Rationalization is often associated with modernization, as it involves replacing irrational old patterns with rational new ones. Modernist Islam is, therefore, an Islamic understanding supported by a rational attitude and complies with the laws of God in the Qur'an and the natural laws of the universe (Sukron & Nawawi, 2021). It is not to be confused with the Western version of "modernism", which embraces the idea of progress, scientific advancements, technological innovations, rationality, and the equal value of individuals *before* God and the government (Reid, 2014).

Some scholars prefer to label the transnational puritan movements as "Islamic Revivalists" as they rise and bring back the essence of early Islam (Maksum, 2017). The mission of these movements lays heavily on fighting against *bid'ah* (innovation of religion), and for this reason, they bring a spirit of "reformist" (Fauzan & Fata, 2021); the term is often used interchangeably with "modernist". The transnational puritan movements claim to possess the capacity to tackle crucial regional concerns and propose solutions that align with Islamic traditions. As a result, they are currently the leading force in facilitating the advancement of democratic norms and principles while embracing liberal democracy. Within religious and democratic organizations, Islamic reformist movements embody a contemporary shift that encompasses political realities and aims to strengthen human rights, civil society, the economy, representation, state transformation, democracy, populism, and pluralism (Mohiuddin, 2019).

The arrival of puritan movements in Indonesia occurred during the Dutch-Indies era, and the phenomenon arose with the rise of anti-colonial sentiments. During Soeharto's "New Order" government from 1968 to 1998, the size and presence of such movements were tempered because of the regime's authoritarian nature. The fall of Soeharto, which ushered in the "Reformation Era," provided opportunities for the growth of social movements, democracy, and freedom of speech. Since then, puritan movements have been part of Indonesian politics (Mutiara, 2023). Several notable movements include the Salafist-Wahhabism in West Sumatra, Al-Irsyad in Northwest Java, Shi'a, Ahmadiyya, and Hizbut Tahrir, as well as a more recent *dakwah* movement brought by the Jemaah Tarbiyah.

Among the movements mentioned above, the *dakwah* movement by the Jemaah Tarbiyah deserves attention. Within this context, *dakwah* is defined as the propagation of Islam through extensive involvement in local education and social engagement. Not only because it has successfully won the heart of many Indonesian Muslims through its focus on education, but Jemaah Tarbiyah has also successfully infiltrated Indonesian politics via the protracted recognition of the Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera/PKS) (Tomsa, 2014), which used to be heavily influenced by the Muslim Brothers of Egypt infamous for their radical ideology. The founders of PKS are senior activists of Jemaah Tarbiyah that embrace the totality of Islam in their practice, thus denying the national ideology of the state (Machmudi, 2008). Interestingly, despite its apparent puritanism, Jemaah Tarbiyah members believe in promoting such tolerance for unity among Muslims, yet deter any alternative views simultaneously. It is an excellent example of a politically-active puritan movement that has successfully walked hand-in-hand with democracy.

This essay will focus on the female faction of the Jemaah Tarbiyah movement. It covers three main areas, namely: 1) the factors that contribute to the appeal of this group to such women, 2) the profile of these women, and 3) the activities they engage in. For the appealing factors, this work will examine both intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics of Jemaah Tarbiyah. It will then analyze the profile of the female followers to provide introspective explanations of the reason for their engagement with Jemaah Tarbiyah and the activities they involve in to create a sense of agency, that is, to strengthen their affiliation and commitment to the group.

2. Ideology, Movement and Political Party

Jemaah Tarbiyah, loosely translated to the “Community of Education,” has been well-known since the 1990s for its in-campus activities, particularly in Campus mosques through the *Rohani Islam* (Islamic Spiritualism) program. Jemaah Tarbiyah conducts its activities through “liqo” study circles, usually held weekly by a teacher and ten participants per group to strengthen the religious knowledge of its members. *Liqo* is a political vehicle of Jemaah Tarbiyah to enforce not only *dakwah* ideologies but also the members’ commitments to the PKS. It is the reason behind the mixed contents of *liqo* lessons, which are predominantly religious-political. Other than belief and worship, a lesson of the polarizing *ghazwul fikri* (ideological conquest) is also taught to the group’s female members (Fuad, 2021).

Liqo is a potent tool to disseminate and strengthen the *dakwah* ideology of the Jemaah Tarbiyah movement, especially for its nature of the trainee-mentor relationship that creates a strong community tie among the members. The restricted number of members in *liqo* circles aims to establish a close connection among members, a familial affinity beyond individuals’ kinship periphery. For this reason, many Jemaah Tarbiyah members refer to *liqo* meetings as *usrah*, which

means family. The members are generally reluctant to leave their current *liqo* groups for the more advanced ones, as they have regarded these groups as “second family.” For the record, the “advanced” groups have more complex Islamic subjects and are led by mentors with higher expertise. The stickiness between the members and their respective *liqo* groups forms a sturdy bond among the trainees and between the mentors and their trainees.

Initially, Jemaah Tarbiyah maintained an ideological viscosity regarding the unison of religion and politics. It was not in line with Indonesia’s religious pluralism and thus once deemed undemocratic (Permata, 2008). Over time, Jemaah Tarbiyah elites realized that a negative Islamist image that was rigid and exclusive caused political disadvantage (Tomsa, 2012). To create a more inclusive image to gain more acceptance in Indonesian society, Jemaah Tarbiyah has been using a softer approach since 2004. In 2008, PKS, embodying Jemaah Tarbiyah’s political Islam, declared itself a pluralist (Platzdasch, 2009) and an “open party” that welcomes non-Muslims (Buehler, 2012). It ignited a dispute within Jemaah Tarbiyah, whereby some members who leaned more toward the religious aspect of the movement instead of politics preferred to be purists instead of pragmatic (Permata, 2013).

Jemaah Tarbiyah inspires to be the agent of religious reform through education and politics as it aims to present itself as a united force of Muslims. As it employs education to disseminate its ideologies, its members naturally consist of students and graduates. For its effective infiltration into the education sector, the movements spread quickly in various places, including secular campuses (non-Islamic universities) (van Bruinessen, 2002). Its strategies are powerful yet subtle and hence resistant to religious disputes among Indonesian Muslims.

Jemaah Tarbiyah does not limit the use of language to promote its movements to only Arabic, as commonly found among other puritan groups. It also operates through slogans inherent in humanist civil movements, such as “peaceful”, “friendly”, “merciful”, and “harmonious faith”, to demonstrate its openness to Western values.

One of the fundamental values in Jemaah Tarbiyah that attracts most of its female followers is the concept of women’s rights and equality (Arimbi, 2017). Even though it segregates its members based on sex, just like most other puritan movements, Jemaah Tarbiyah distinguishes itself by accepting Islamic feminism, that is, the acknowledgment of women’s vital role within the Islamic framework. In contrast to most Islamic revivalist movements, Jemaah Tarbiyah leans heavily towards the modern interpretation of Islam by incorporating several Western concepts, such as democracy, civil society, and human rights.

Interestingly, Jemaah Tarbiyah greatly emphasizes religion or piety throughout its movement. This key element is subsequently politicized by the movement to draw more support from Indonesian Muslims by stressing the multidimensional application of Islam, including in politics. The inclusion of women’s rights into its Islamic tenet, ranking women parallel to men, is the most attrac-

tive element for most Indonesian Muslim women. For this reason, many Muslim women sign up to be the activists of Jemaah Tarbiyah.

In 2018, the number of female legislative candidates in the Jemaah Tarbiyah political party, PKS, was the highest among other Islamic and secular parties, occupying 34% of political chairs (Rachman, 2018). In the 2019 elections, PKS prepared its female candidates thoroughly for electoral competition. Women candidates took their campaigning seriously, holding intensive meetings with women voters and demonstrating commitment and capacity (Rohfani & Fuad, 2021).

PKS vouches for women to be the partners of men in creating politics. It commits to elevating women's social and political roles in their families and society. There is a division within the PKS organization that specializes in improving the quality of female members. This division also aims to increase the capacity of female cadres and optimize their potential in the organization (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera: Indonesia Madani Yang Adil, Sejahtera Dan Bermartabat*, 2017).

PKS acknowledges the prolonged discrimination faced by many women in Indonesia. The party believes that women must serve their "essential" and "extended" roles, referring to their dedication to the family and society, respectively. The latter underscores their voice in the Indonesian political sphere (*Bidang Perempuan Dan Ketahanan Keluarga (BPKK)*).

3. Emergence and Acceptance

The understanding and practice of religious authority have changed in today's Indonesia. It has caused a transformation in religious discourses and practices. Indonesian Muslims used to think that only *Ulama*, or credible religious figures, could provide authoritative views about Islam. Nowadays, real experts and lay-people can claim this religious authority, primarily due to the rapid development of transnational Islamist movements. The traditional religious bodies in Indonesia, such as NU and Muhammadiyah, feel undermined by this shifting pattern of seeking religious knowledge (Akmaliyah, 2020). It then creates a competition between local Islamic institutions and new transnational movements. The transnational movements also inspire many religious individuals to actively construct their authority within their community (Burhani, 2020).

The emergence of the Jemaah Tarbiyah movement in Indonesian society closely correlated with the transnational Ikhwanul Muslimin (Muslim Brotherhood) in Egypt. Urban and educated people worldwide led the movement and eventually gained prominence in religiocultural areas. Upon its arrival in Indonesia, Jemaah Tarbiyah received acceptance by adopting religious symbols, i.e., Muslim clothing among Indonesian Muslims and through the humble, friendly study groups. Ten years after, this movement successfully established a political domain through PKS (Damanik, 2002). It depicts how Jemaah Tarbiyah evolves from a religiocultural to a religiopolitical movement.

The political turmoil experienced by many Middle East countries in the 1960s

was the main reason for the rise of Ikhwanul Muslimin's urban and educated activists in that region. Its priority on education became its most prominent quality, expediting this movement's spread in many parts of the world, including Indonesia (Machmudi, 2008). Its arrival in Indonesia parallely occurred with the increasing number of Indonesian students pursuing higher degrees in many Middle Eastern countries (Abaza, 1994). The Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII) movement greatly influenced such an increase. Its relation with many of the then leaders in the Middle East had successfully facilitated many Indonesian tertiary scholars to study in various universities there through a substantial amount of funding received (van Bruinessen, 2004).

DDII was the most eminent agent of spreading Ikhwanul Muslimin's ideology, ideas, and propagation methods. It also contributed to the increasing trend of Islamic activities on Indonesian campuses by translating multifarious contemporary literature written by Islamic revivalists in the Middle East. It has also become the turning point of the advent of international influence, including the Islamist movements, impacting activism in Indonesia. The founder of DDII, Mohammad Nassir, had great sympathy for the Ikhwanul Muslimin as Islamist movements in Indonesia experienced similar political repression by the government with their counterparts worldwide during that period. Nassir believed he could apply the disseminating method of Ikhwanul Muslimin in the Indonesian context to revive and develop a *dakwah* movement after many Islamic intellectuals were eliminated from the Indonesian political stage (Latif, 2012).

During Soeharto's New Order, Indonesian Islamist intellectuals conducted *dakwah* through a softer method of social movement impervious to government control. It involved social service and mobilization of the new Islamist collective movement in many secular universities. Especially after the return of Islamic scholars from the Middle East, the promise of the Islamist movement was the most strategic topic propagated in campus mosques to promote Jemaah Tarbiyah ideology. It was also complimented by *pengajian* (Qur'anic study group) and Islamic training brought up by popular key ideologues who obtained credibility as alumni from the Middle East. Their presence received a warm welcome, especially from middle-income Indonesian Muslims with tertiary and post-graduate academic backgrounds (Fatah & Akim, 2022).

The fall of Soeharto's New Order Regime benefitted the Jemaah Tarbiyah movement by widening its activism outreach to the Indonesian Muslim society. The spread of Jemaah Tarbiyah's wings started in workplaces, social service institutions, and campuses, with the latest being the most effective premises for propagation. The localized campus-based movement eventually turned national through the inter-campus network and manifested in political activism. The political activists fueled the formation of Islamist political parties such as PKS.

Initially, the formation of PKS invited a great debate within the movement. Some preferred to stick with what was perceived as the original cultural approach instead of politics in promoting the movement's ideology, while others

deemed the divergence as progression. It is necessary to note that Ikhwanul Muslimin, the movement inspiring Jemaah Tarbiyah, had always been political. Notwithstanding this, some scholars argue that the earliest mission of Ikhwanul Muslimin did not enclose the practice of politics (Fadilah et al., 2020). Hence, the decision to create a political party certainly affected the *dakwah* movement, albeit not always negatively. Such a decision was never expected, not even by Jemaah Tarbiyah leaders and cadres. Through PKS as its political vessel, Jemaah Tarbiyah has been carrying out massive re-Islamisation on the multilevel of the individual, family, society, and state (Majelis Pertimbangan Pusat Partai Kadilan Sejahtera, 2008). PKS is therefore seen as the complete realization of the *dakwah* movement, which, prior to that, had been operated through imprecise forms and names.

4. The Women of Jemaah Tarbiyah

The female members of Jemaah Tarbiyah generally have equal social status with their male counterparts. They come from different ages, political experiences, and occupations. Most of them belong to the middle-income group and work as teachers, doctors, businesswomen, and the list continues. Those who would like to embark on the political trajectory of the movements have to fulfill specific criteria, including being married, obtaining permission from their husbands, having no children below five years of age, and being financially stable (Rosdiana, personal communication, April 15, 2023).

Many female members of Jemaah Tarbiyah are mothers, as shown by the inclusion of children in the *liqo* groups they attend. While most *liqo* circles emanate a solemn atmosphere, the ones with children are generally noisy and done intermittently as the mother members need to calm and soothe their crying children occasionally. It accentuates the nature of *liqo* that accommodates female mothers by allowing them to carry out their worldly responsibilities as mothers without missing the spiritual aspects of their lives. At the same time, the phenomenon also illustrates that many of these women get little support in looking after their children, as compared to their male father counterparts, who rarely come with their children (Fuad, 2020).

Another noteworthy point is how many of these women joined Jemaah Tarbiyah through kinship and personal ties. They feel more comfortable being part of this movement when there is someone familiar already there, especially when they happen to be friends, family members, or neighbors. It can be understood that women join Jemaah Tarbiyah not only by personal choice but also by the support or interventions from their close acquaintances. The senior friends and family members already in the group are often the catalysts for the new members to embrace the movement's ideology (Fuad, 2020).

Women also draw themselves to the Jemaah Tarbiyah through marriage. The movement uses a process called *ta'aruf* (Islamic introduction) to facilitate rapport building between the male member and the female candidate of the group,

which subsequently will get married to each other (Asyari & Abid, 2016). These women believe that marrying righteous men will help them develop ideal families, according to Islamic criteria (Al-Banna, 2021).

The cadre system of Jemaah Tarbiyah delivers the opportunity for endogamy marriage among its members. Most female members of this group are the wives of Jemaah Tarbiyah male cadres. The members idealize each other as having the same values and principles in life. Thus, they trust that inter-member marriages create compatible households conducive to breeding the movement's next generation. In addition, having similar interests minimizes the differences between the couple so that they can establish family life under Jemaah Tarbiyah's ways. The members believe this intra-marriage method sustains the movement's ideology and propaganda, especially within these three main areas: 1) maintaining the concept of the organization, 2) obtaining the blessing from God, and 3) preserving the teaching and fraternity of Jemaah Tarbiyah (Muhsin, 2017).

Most Jemaah Tarbiyah female members are "conservative." Islamic conservatism refers to ideological practice and understanding taken solely from the holy book (Qur'an) and the words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Internet and social media partly contribute to the prevalence of conservative attitudes in Jemaah Tarbiyah. Among all channels, YouTube is the most convenient medium for reinforcing conservatism among the female members of this movement, where several renowned preachers propagate Jemaah Tarbiyah's ideology through videos available for consumption at any place and time. The excellent accessibility of YouTube enhances its effectiveness as a propagation tool.

There are three hypotheses concerning conservatism in Indonesia. First, the majority of Indonesian Muslims are conservative. Second, the proponents of moderate Islam have included politics in their agenda and therefore undermined the principle of moderation that they should have upheld. Third, the overwhelming influence of the Middle East promotes Islam conservatism (van Bruinessen, 2011). The third point underpins the permeation of conservatism in Indonesian society through popular key ideologues who mostly graduated from Middle Eastern universities. Many Indonesian Muslim women, including the female members of Jemaah Tarbiyah, subscribe to such religious influencers.

Being a pious woman is the ultimate purpose for members of the Tarbiyah movement. However, the female followers of Jemaah Tarbiyah create a distinction between their life within the movement and their life outside it. Within the movement, they dedicate themselves as the envisioned pious Muslim women, yet this will differ from their mundane and secular activities outside the movement (Arimbi, 2017). The in- and out-group flexibility provided by Jemaah Tarbiyah wins the heart of its female followers. It allows them to choose and express themselves without fear of peer pressure and in-group judgment. This element is unique among puritan movements and Indonesia's Islam conception of women's rights.

Most women in Jemaah Tarbiyah don headscarves (*hijab*) to create a sense of

collective identity as members of social and religious groups. It represents how they see themselves as in-group vis-à-vis out-group members. The primary reason they wear *hijab* is to show their commitment to complying with Islamic requirements. Islam expects women to appear modest by covering their bodies except for their faces and palms. The Guide book of Jemaah Tarbiyah mentions further that females should wear loose apparel with thick material (Ramadhini, 2017). *Hijab* also produces a sense of legitimacy for female members of Jemaah Tarbiyah, affirming them as part of this movement. *Hijab* magically creates an assumption that whoever wears it has a better understanding and knowledge of Islam, hence assisting Jemaah Tarbiyah's women in propagation and recruitment activities.

Three prominent reasons for wearing *hijab* are to follow Islamic law, to align with Jemaah Tarbiyah values, and to optimize their political activism in PKS. Among Jemaah Tarbiyah's female members, the *hijab* reflects a political orientation and party ideology. *Hijab* creates an image of credibility for these women, whereby people will consider them "comprehensive Muslims". However, this will depend on the target areas and societies, as not everyone resonates with *hijab*, such as in some locations where many people embrace the traditional Javanese belief system known as *kejawen* (Ni'mah, 2021).

An interview conducted with a member of Jemaah Tarbiyah sheds some light on how gender discourse maneuvers within this movement. The three crucial points raised here include: 1) the female followers of Jemaah Tarbiyah associate gender separation with neither male superiority nor female subordination, 2) they perceive men as companions of women, and 3) they see themselves as the cadres of Jemaah Tarbiyah, with voices and equal rights in propagating the movement's ideology (Rosdiana, personal communication, April 15, 2023).

The female members of Jemaah Tarbiyah rarely engage in a theological debate on the role of women in Islam as compared to many Muslim feminists in other puritan organizations. They view Islamic texts' meanings as axiomatic and it is likely the reason behind their conformation towards male domination in the leadership structure of Jemaah Tarbiyah (Rinaldo, 2013). These women also adhere to the Jemaah Tarbiyah principle that prioritizes women's essential role before the extended one.

An example of how the female members of Jemaah Tarbiyah avoid theological disputes can be observed in their way of accepting the concept of polygamy. In Islam, polygamy is allowed, even though many scholars contest it based on different hermeneutical interpretations of the context. Unlike most Muslim women, the Jemaah Tarbiyah's women do not oppose the idea of polygamy. In fact, many preach about it as an act of honoring the Islamic Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Rohman, 2013) and an expression of respecting men's rights (Nabil, 2019).

The key ideologues of the Jemaah Tarbiyah movement play critical roles in implanting ideologies among the members. They use narratives to persuade or

dissuade the members from doing certain activities or adopting certain concepts. In the case of polygamy, for instance, the revolving narratives involve four main themes. First, the number of Muslim women in Indonesia far exceeds that of Muslim men. Hence, polygamy is believed to solve this ratio imbalance problem in society and to ensure all Muslim women have husbands to marry. Second, many women are described to be weak and abandoned. Thus, polygamy is seen as the only solution for them to gain happiness due to the imbalance in the population ratio previously mentioned. Third, as men lead women in Islam, they have the advantage of having more than one wife (Rohman, 2013). Four, the Qur'anic story of the Prophet Ibrahim's wife, Sarah, is emphasized as it encourages women to avoid jealousy, to be submissive to their husbands, to be patient when facing challenges, and to approve of polygamy. Sarah was a ninety-year-old woman who could not conceive a child, so she encouraged her husband to marry another woman to get offspring (Faizi, 2008).

It is important to note that hierarchy exists in how ideologies flow from the key leaders of the movements to the group members. Several male key ideologists will promote a concept or idea to the *liqo* leaders across all male and female groups, who then cascade it onto the rest of the group members. The top-down and patriarchal indoctrination pattern is commonly observed in Jemaah Tarbiyah. In the case of polygamy, the justification of the concept arrived from the male key leaders of Jemaah Tarbiyah. It was reiterated by the group's preachers on YouTube and subscribed by many of its female members. The complying attitude of Jemaah Tarbiyah's women on this particular issue depicts their openness in accepting any ideologies propagated in the groups through the application of religious narratives to solve worldly issues.

5. The Socio-Political Interests of Jemaah Tarbiyah Women

The female members of Jemaah Tarbiyah self-actualize themselves through *liqo*. The reasons behind their participation in *liqo* extend beyond religion and piety as they also seek social networks and friendships or to satisfy the prerequisite before joining the movement's political aspects. In other words, their experiences with the *liqo* are not homogeneous, indicating varied perspectives about their group presence (Fuad, 2021).

The female members of Jemaah Tarbiyah possess intertwining roles regarding religion and politics. Through *liqo*, they fortify their religious knowledge and piety while consistently realigning their political framework to the ones of the movement. The key leaders of Jemaah Tarbiyah advise the *liqo*'s mentors to recruit trainees from the same vicinity to ease the gathering facilitation.

On leadership, the female members of Jemaah Tarbiyah can lead both men and women within the group (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera: Indonesia Madani Yang Adil, Sejahtera Dan Bermartabat*, 2017), especially when men are incapable of specific tasks. Outside the group, the women often lead both men and women, believing that leadership is paramount in women. They idolize one of Prophet

Muhammad's wives, Aisyah, as she led and commanded a battle in the past with her intelligence. Aisyah is a prototype of gender equality and leadership for the female followers of Jemaah Tarbiyah, aspects that are well-facilitated by this movement.

Within the Jemaah Tarbiyah movement, women's involvement frequently taps into religious matters. They believe that involvement in politics is a form of religious devotion. In other words, they determine it as an act of worship and serving good deeds. Nevertheless, in the political dimension, they often place their professional identities before religion to connect with the community. On this account, the content of their political campaigns mainly revolves around everyday issues with the brief inclusion of religion. The issues cover women's political empowerment and economic welfare, targeted at the grassroots level (Naryati, personal communication, April 17, 2023). The issues relating to motherhood, leadership, and women's role in society supersede the ones of gender and inequality.

As PKS embodies the social and political interests of Jemaah Tarbiyah's women, it mediates various activities channeling the enthusiasm of these women over sociopolitical issues. This social outreach positively impacts society's political trust toward these women. They count on social involvement to educate society on the party's role in developing society. They believe that the more people acknowledge the benefits delivered by PKS, the easier for them to accept the party's political agenda (Humas Fraksi PKS, 2022).

Nevertheless, the participation of female Jemaah Tarbiyah in PKS faces several obstacles, including disinterest in competing with man cadres, as they think it is a waste of time to do so because, by default, men can hold more positions and take more opportunities than women. Some politically-driven female members struggle to split their household duties from political activism. In the end, many prioritized household responsibilities over politics, positioning themselves as supporters of PKS rather than activists. They also hand over matters unrelated to womanhood to the male cadres (Haryati, 2017).

Contrary to the above, female members of Jemaah Tarbiyah living in different areas share different experiences regarding how they see their involvement in politics. These women have an identical attitude to their male cadres and have no resistance toward politics as they believe that competence and ability, not gender, determine the political capacity of Jemaah Tarbiyah members. They also distinguish political leadership from religious one and approve of female leaders and their political role in society (Fauzi et al., 2019).

Some female members of Jemaah Tarbiyah who are active in politics are also members of Majelis Syura, an informal political faction of PKS. It has 99 members, of which only ten percent are female. It reveals how much access the female members have to this political wing. They are disappointed in the lack of opportunity given to women to influence policy-making and political practice of PKS, especially those on women empowerment. On the other hand, they under-

stand that there are criteria women must meet to be members of this faction. The insignificant number of females in Majelis Syura PKS creates a somewhat harsh, unsettling climate for such women, although all of them are given the right to speak during meetings. They also find that the group overpraises the male leaders and overemphasizes manly topics, not to mention that behaviors, languages, and norms surrounding the meeting are incompatible with women, their issues, needs, and priorities (Darmastuti, 2017).

More female members are reluctant to attend the meetings, which hinders the rest of the females in the group from joining, as they psychologically feel outnumbered by men. Some mention that the atmosphere makes them feel estranged from the Jemaah Tarbiyah movement. Many of them need to be more active and present in the group. For this reason, many of them organize off-group meetings to facilitate themselves in discussing issues not covered in the male-dominated Majelis Syura (Darmastuti, 2017).

6. Conclusion

Among all the existing puritan movements in Indonesia, Jemaah Tarbiyah deserves our attention for its achievement in running hand in hand with Indonesian democracy. In fact, Jemaah Tarbiyah is the only puritan movement in Indonesia occupying the state parliament through PKS as its political conveyance. Jemaah Tarbiyah is the impetus behind the religiopolitical activism of PKS, in which the number of female members steadily expands over the years.

The unique features found in the ideology embraced by Jemaah Tarbiyah caused it to stand out among the rest of the puritan movements in Indonesia. From its propagation method of using education through the selection process of educated leaders within its organizational structure, Jemaah Tarbiyah has effectively penetrated Indonesian society and has been welcomed by most Indonesian Muslims. Its flexibility in adopting and adapting to the preexisting concepts found in Indonesian society has brought Jemaah Tarbiyah to the acceptance level usually difficult to reach by puritan movements. Its respect for Pancasila and its image of “moderate Islam” prevent it from being perceived as a threat to the Indonesian democratic system, providing ample space to thrive.

The female members of Jemaah Tarbiyah were attracted to the movement because the concept of gender equality exists here, which is foreign in most puritan groups. The acknowledgment from Jemaah Tarbiyah in the role of women within family, society, and politics is the primary reason why such women are attracted to this group and even vouch for it. They see this movement as the facilitator to better their piety and religious knowledge and to be the vessel for their social interests and political objectives. It is also complimented by the sense of agency, significance, and credibility that such women reciprocally receive through their involvement in the movement.

Even though men dominate Jemaah Tarbiyah, they do not hinder women’s role in supporting the organization’s mission. On the other side of the coin, Je-

maah Tarbiyah women recognize the existence of anti-feminism by the male members and aim to soften this by maximizing their political contribution to Indonesian society. Despite this, many Jemaah Tarbiyah female followers employ similar views to the male members concerning feminism. It demonstrates the heterogeneity of Jemaah Tarbiyah female members in multiple aspects, including their diverse social and cultural demography moderating their conformation to the ideology and political stance of the movement.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- Abaza, M. (1994). *Islamic Education Perceptions and Exchanges Indonesian Students in Cairo*. Association Archipel.
- Akmaliyah, W. (2020). The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 10, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i1.1-24>
- Al-Banna, H. (2021). *Himpunan Risalah*. Pustaka Salam.
- Arimbi, D. A. (2017). Politicizing Piety: Women's Rights and Roles in the Tarbiyah Movement in Indonesia. *Religious Studies and Theologies*, 36, 227-243. <https://doi.org/10.1558/rsth.35160>
- Asyari, S., & Abid, M. H. (2016). Expanding the Indonesian Tarbiyah Movement through Ta'Aruf and Marriage. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 54, 337-368. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2016.542.337-368>
- Azra, A. (2018). Cultural Pluralism in Indonesia: Continuous Reinventing of Indonesian Islam in Local, National and Global Contexts. *Asia Pacific Journal on Religion and Society*, 2, 56-60.
- Bidang Perempuan dan Ketahanan Keluarga (BPKK)* (n.d.). <https://pks.id/bpkk/>
- Buehler, M. (2012). Revisiting the Inclusion-Moderation Thesis in the Context of Decentralized Institutions: The Behavior of Indonesia's Prosperous Justice Party in National and Local Politics. *Party Politics*, 19, 210-229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068812462933>
- Burhani, A. N. (2020). Muslim Televangelists in the Making: Conversion Narratives and the Construction of Religious Authority. *The Muslim World*, 110, 154-175. <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12327>
- Damanik, A. S. (2002). *Fenomena Partai Keadilan Transformasi 20 Tahun Gerakan Tarbiyah di Indonesia*. Penerbit Teraju.
- Darmastuti, A. (2017). *Hak Politik dan Partisipasi Perempuan dalam Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*. AURA.
- Fadilah, R. N., Lestari, T., Faizah, A.-Z. S., & Hidayatullah, A. F. (2020). Wajah Baru Gerakan Dakwah Kampus (Gerakan Tarbiyah) Era Sekarang. *Jurnal Tabligh*, 21, 49-57. <https://doi.org/10.24252/jdt.v21i1.11361>
- Faizi, M. (2008). *Kisah Nyata 25 Nabi dan Rasul*. Tera Insani.
- Fatah, M. F. S., & Akim, A. (2022). The Translocalization of the Muslim Brotherhood's Ideas to the Tarbiyah Congregation in Indonesia. *Global Strategies*, 16, 285-306.

- <https://doi.org/10.20473/jgs.16.2.2022.285-306>
- Fauzan, P. I., & Fata, A. K. (2021). Rethinking Howard M. Federspiel's Thesis on The Conflict between Persatuan Islam (PERSIS) VS Permoefakatan Islam. *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies*, 5, 37-76.
<https://doi.org/10.30821/jcims.v5i1.8889>
- Fauzi, A. M., Novinayah, F. S., Darmawan, O. A., & Rivaldi, R. (2019). Kontroversi Sosial Caleg Perempuan PKS (Komunikasi Politik, Dogma Agama dan Afirmasi). *MEDIAKOM: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 3, 40-52. <https://doi.org/10.32528/mdk.v3i1.2410>
- Fuad, A. F. N. (2020). *Da'wa* and Politics: Lived Experiences of the Female Islamist in Indonesia. *Contemporary Islam*, 14, 19-47. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-019-00442-x>
- Fuad, A. F. N. (2021). Female Religious Authority among Tarbiyah Communities in Contemporary Indonesia. *Archipel*, 102, 187-207. <https://doi.org/10.4000/archipel.2657>
- Haryati, E. (2017). Partisipasi Politik Perempuan dalam Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) di Kabupaten Jepara. *Journal of Politic and Government Studies*, 6, 101-110.
- Humas Fraksi PKS (2022). *Diah Nurwitasari: Perempuan PKS Harus Jadi Tokoh untuk Optimalkan Layanan bagi Masyarakat*.
<https://fraksi.pks.id/2022/12/02/diah-nurwitasari-perempuan-pks-harus-jadi-tokoh-untuk-optimalkan-layanan-bagi-masyarakat/>
- Latif, Y. (2012). *Inteligensia Muslim dan Kuasa: Genealogi Inteligensia Muslim Indonesia Abad Ke-20*. Democracy Project Yayasan Abad Demokrasi.
- Machmudi, Y. (2008). *Islamising Indonesia: The Rise of Jemaah Tarbiyah and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)*. The Australian National University.
<https://doi.org/10.22459/II.11.2008>
- Majelis Pertimbangan Pusat Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (2008). *Memperjuangkan Masyarakat Madani: Falsafah Dasar Perjuangan dan Platform Kebijakan Pembangunan PK Sejahtera*. MPP PKS.
- Maksum, A. (2017). Discourse on Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: A Study on the Intellectual Debate between Liberal Islam Network (JIL) and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). *Journal of Indonesia Islam*, 2, 405-422.
<https://doi.org/10.15642/IIS.2017.11.2.405-422>
- Mohiuddin, A. (2019). Globalisation, State and Transnational Islamist Movements. *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 23, 70-91.
- Muhsin, I. (2017). Endogamous Marriage of Jamaah Tarbiyah: A Sociological Study of the Jamaah Tarbiyah in Salatiga. *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah*, 17, 25-46.
<https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v17i1.6226>
- Mutiara, R. (2023). The Challenge from Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia. *RSIS Commentary*.
- Nabil, M. F. (2019). Narasi Poligami di kalangan Muslimah Aktifis Dakwah Kampus di Yogyakarta: Konservatisme dalam Hukum Keluarga Islam. *Al-Ahwal*, 12, 65-83.
<https://doi.org/10.14421/ahwal.2019.12106>
- Naryati, D. (2023). [Personal Communication].
- Ni'mah, Z. (2021). The Political Meaning of the Hijab Style of Women Candidates. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 40, 174-197.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103421989071>
- Partai Keadilan Sejahtera: Indonesia Madani yang Adil, Sejahtera dan Bermartabat* (Platform Kebijakan Pembangunan) (2017). Majelis Pertimbangan Pusat.
- Permata, A.-N. (2008). *Islamist Party and Democratic Participation: Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia 1998-2006*. Universite de Munster.

- Permata, A.-N. (2013). A Study on the Internal Dynamics of the Justice and Welfare Party (PKS) and Jama'ah Tarbiyah. In *Regime Change, Democracy, and Islam: The Case of Indonesia*. Universiteit Leiden.
- Platzdasch, B. (2009). *Islamism in Indonesia: Politics in the Emerging Democracy*. ISEAS Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814279109>
- Rachman, D. A. (2018). *PKS Ungkap Jumlah Caleg Perempuan 212 Orang*. KOMPAS.com. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2018/07/18/05300221/pks-ungkap-jumlah-caleg-perempuan-212-orang>
- Ramadhini, E. (2017). Jilbab sebagai Representasi Simbolik Mahasiswa Muslim di Universitas Indonesia. *Masyarakat, Jurnal Sosiologi*, 22, 81-103. <https://doi.org/10.7454/mjs.v22i1.6835>
- Reid, A. (2014). *Patriarchy and Puritanism in Southeast Asian Modernity*. In P. J. Bräunlein, M. Dickhardt, K. Klenke, & A. Lauser, (Eds.), *DORISEA Working Paper Series*, No. 8 (pp. 3-12). Institut für Ethnologie.
- Rinaldo, R. (2013). *Mobilizing Piety: Islam and Feminism in Indonesia*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199948109.001.0001>
- Rohfani, R., & Fuad, A. N. (2021). Moderating Anti-Feminism: Islamism and Women Candidates in the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 40, 156-173. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103421989076>
- Rohman, A. (2013). Reinterpret Polygamy in Islam: A Case Study in Indonesia. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 10, 68-74. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2258284>
- Rosdiana, D. (2023). [Personal Communication].
- Sukron, M., & Nawawi, F. (2021). Islamic Modernism and the Development of Islamic Intellectualism. *Islamic Studies Journal*, 1, 54-73.
- Tomsa, D. (2012). Moderating Islamism in Indonesia: Tracing Patterns of Party Change in the Prosperous Justice Party. *Political Research Quarterly*, 65, 486-498. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912911404566>
- Tomsa, D. (2014). Party System Fragmentation in Indonesia: The Subnational Dimension. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 14, 249-278. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1598240800008924>
- van Bruinessen, M. (2002). Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia. *South East Asia Research*, 10, 117-154. <https://doi.org/10.5367/000000002101297035>
- van Bruinessen, M. (2004). Post-Suharto Muslim Engagement with Civil Society and Democratization. In H. Samuel & H. S. Nordholt (Eds.), *Indonesia in Transition: Re-thinking 'Civil Society', 'Region', and 'Crisis'*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- van Bruinessen, M. (2011). *What Happened to the Smiling Face of Indonesian Islam? Muslim Intellectualism and the Conservative Turn in Post-Suharto Indonesia*. RSIS Working Paper, No. 222. S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.
- van Bruinessen, M. (2013). Introduction: Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam and the "Conservative Turn" of the Early Twenty-First Century. In *Contemporary Development in Indonesian Islam*. ISEAS Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814414579-005>