

## Langgar and the Agency of Women in Developing Religious Literacy: A Research-Based on Participatory in Southern Rembang

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### Abstract

This research explains the multiple barriers of women in rural villages in Southern Rembang, Indonesia. Beside economics and culture, they also face religious barriers in which religious learning and literacy are privileged to only certain people. Kajar is a village where Human Development Index is below the national level and women have dual roles as both domestic workers and family caretakers. Unfortunately, the poverty and lack of purpose in women's education have limited women's choices and voices. Through research-based on participation in making women agents of social-religious change, this research finds that women are robust agents for developing literacy based on *langgar* for their consistency and ability to influence their family, neighborhood, and society. The agencies of women are also going through making the *langgar* as 'unofficial madrasa' where children, both male, and female, are learning religious knowledge equally. Although the impact is not that instant, the agencies have slowly improved religious knowledge and perception of female religious education.

**Keywords:** *Langgar*, religious literacy, women development

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## Introduction

Famous poetry from an Egyptian poet, Hafiz Ibrahim, said “*Al-ummu madrasatul ula, idza a'dadtaha a'dadta sya'ban thayyibal a'raq*” which is loosely translated as “the mother is the first school when they are well-prepared; we have prepared a strong foundation for the strong nation”. As women play a pivotal role in building society, they are also vulnerable in facing cultural-religious barriers. Such as cultural barriers in a patriarchal society where women are always located behind men which then produces cultural practices giving disadvantage to women, such as the practice of early marriage (Rohmaniyah, 2018) and domestic violence (Joll, Aree, and Rijal 2020). Indeed, in rural villages, women are responsible for the life and goodness of their families. They play multiple roles as an economic helper, household caretaker and contributor in many religious activities. However, in many rural places, women are still vulnerable in facing multiple barriers, for they have limited access to improve their capacity and capability (Badara, and Jamiludin 2020) a critical discourse analysis approach is also used. The subjects of this research are female workers found in newspaper news discourse with Islamic ideology as a background and newspapers with nationalist-secular ideology. Data were analyzed through critical discourse analysis techniques in the following steps: description, interpretation, and explanation. This research still considers checking reliability and validity. Data analysis is also complemented by the confirmation of linguists and peers (triangulation of sources).

In many investigations on women's participation in education and religious activities, their participation is considered as secondary, supporters or only as a complement (Mulia, 2005). In Indonesian context, at least there are two basic reasons for abandoning women participation in the field of religious activities and education. *The First* is a strong cultural perception in locating women as *kanca wingking* (friend-behind). This perception is strongly rooted in the idea that the appropriate place for women is in the house and therefore they are responsible for the domestic area (Siti Syamsiyatun, 2007). Second is religious conception considering women as the second human being in which following-obeying their men and family is part of religious obedience (Bauer, 2015). Therefore, in

many women's empowerment agendas, such barriers are somehow challenging to tackle since women are constructed to be good and obedient wives for their husband and their family. Indeed, within state programs such as PKK (Family Welfare Program), the programs are obligating the women to maintain the harmony of their families (Wieringa, 2015) In this context, state has been using secular-religious instrument to control their citizen to be obedient and pious (Ahmet T Kuru 2007).

Beside cultural practices and customs that limit women's roles in society, the religious view also limits women from public life and from having equal access to religious places (Saba Mahmood, 2012). In many places where Mosque is centered for religious activities such as religious-social gathering, praying, and learning for reciting the Qur'an, the roles of women are frequently excluded (Nurhakki and Haq, 2017). Indeed, in term of social-economic empowerment and philanthropy, women's roles are significant, but their roles are not really overlooked (Jaya, 2018), including in religious philanthropy (Mahfud, 2018). In the village of Kajar, the mosque and *Langgar* (a place for worship, but not for the Friday congregation) also limit women's role. Indeed, as the central places for many activities of religious learning such as studying the Qur'an and social gatherings, women make significant contributions (Nyhagen, 2019). Since there is no official place to study the Qur'an such as TPQ (*Taman Pendidikan Qur'an*/ loosely translated as Al-Qur'an Education School) or to study religious knowledge (*madrassa diniyyah*). By this condition, *Langgar* becomes main place for conducting any religious activities.

Located in a remote area and geographically isolated from nearby villages. There is only one elementary school and the access to nearby secondary school is about 15 Km. Based on the regional statistical data, Kajar is the home for a significant number of people under national illiteracy. From the total population, there are approximately 28% of people from the X generation (40-55 Years old and now the parent) who have never attended elementary school and have limited insight into religious knowledge. Following the data, this village is also home to early marriage and is under the national poverty line. This number is comparable to the data from

the Regional Development Planning Board that the progress of the Human Development Index is relatively low and below the national level (Bappeda, 2019). Indeed, the average of women's educational level is still unequal compared to men.

Based on the data, the researcher then conducts research based on participation and action. This pilot project is to improve the social life and religious literacy for women and also make women agents for social change. Locating women as agents are seeing them as the subject who can act independently and determine their actions based on their motivation. Centering women as agents also sees them as the subjects who actively move forward and are against the hitherto condition. Indeed preparing women as agents is also to empower them to challenge the structure domination and power relation within particular custom that limits their actions (Goddard, 2000). Women's agency is significant in a term that women could actively participate in the public-religious domain, challenging the mainstream outlook of custom and religious view and also managing their ability in influencing their family and society. By locating women as agents means understanding their position as the subjects who decide and are responsible for their further action (Klugman, 2014).

In the field of empowerment, this study is aware that in studying women's agency, many focus on the roles of women in the urban area, and conversely, the roles of women in the rural areas are often neglected (Badara and Jamiludin 2020) a critical discourse analysis approach is also used. The subjects of this research are female workers found in newspaper news discourse with Islamic ideology as a background and newspapers with nationalist-secular ideology. Data were analyzed through critical discourse analysis techniques in the following steps: description, interpretation, and explanation. This research still considers checking reliability and validity. Data analysis is also complemented by the confirmation of linguists and peers (triangulation of sources. Indeed, women and rural villages have the same position that is considered as "the second". Borrowing the words from Simone de Beauvoir, women are "the second sex" in society, and the rural villages are the second gaze of development-empowerment (Candraningrum, 2014). Thus,

women in the rural area are facing multiple barriers, for they were neglected in the development program and also underestimated for their social position. It is not surprising to see women in rural villages appear in the negative frame of underprivileged, illiteracy, precarious poverty, and left behind (Muthaleb, 2019).

Here, locating women as agents for social change in religious sites is about to narrate that women are also capable to make significant changes from economic to religious issues (Hidayatulloh and Nurhidayati 2020). In many places, women are robust agents for social transformation in their community, for they play important role in the social-religious transformation (Muslikhati, 2004). Therefore, this paper attempts to narrate that educating women is beneficial not only for themselves per se but also for their family and society. In terms of developing religious literacy in a rural village, the position of the religious sites such as mosques and *Langgar* are important, for it is designed not only for religious purposes, but also social-cultural needs (Ajahari, 2009) and social-economic philanthropy. As a female area, *Langgar* is a place for women to gather for social and religious activities. Therefore, making the *Langgar* a site to improve women's religious knowledge capacity is beneficial. The objective of this research is to explain how women in the rural areas have significant impact in improving their capacity through extending the use of *langgar*.

### **Literature Review**

This literature review focuses on three keywords, religious site, rural women agency, and religious literacy. Dealing with religious sites such as mosques, women's experiences on the sites of religious activities are vast and varied. On the research about historical narration of women in mosque, Reda provides the historical analysis on the use of the mosque during prophetic era and during Umar reign. Based on textual sources, this paper argues that the segregation between males and females in the mosques happened during the period of *sahabat* (prophet companion). However, during the period of prophet hood, both males and females had the same access to the mosque. (Reda, Samad, and Reda 2004).

Concerning the mosque, in 2017 Mufidah also dealt with the

problem of gender equality in the mosque. Locating her research in East Java in the three regions with different typologies; *Tapal Kuda*, *Arek'an*, and *Mataraman*, she argues that there is still inequality within the structure relation of society including in the mosque. Although, these regions have different cultural bases on relation between religion and culture, likely women have the similar experiences of being subordinated and discriminated. Mosque becomes an important place to change the view between male and female and to break patriarchal barriers (Mufidah, 2017). These researches were previously affirmed by Nurhakki in 2017 that sees unequal representation between males and females in mosque. As a religious site, the mosque should be accessible and should accommodate the facilities for both males and females for they have the same demand on practicing religious duties. However, many mosques' facilities such as main areas, places of prayer, ablution places, and dressing rooms were mostly provided for males, while women facilities are still inadequate. As Nurhakki relates the religious site and the dominant structure of mosque in the field of *idarab* (office), *imarab* (leadership) *ri'ayah* (care-taker) are all men. Therefore, this paper argues that mosque is not responsive for gender inequality (Nurhakki and Haq 2017). However, these researches only focus on the use of mosque as a religious site. It lacks of view in the dynamic relation between the mosque and other religious site such as *surau* or *Langgar* in the process of social building.

The second keyword is rural women agency. In this research, a series of great works on these issues was done in special series of the volume published in *Jurnal Perempuan* in 2019. Among the series research are about the practice of economic development, resource management, ecology and social inclusion where women are the avant-garde and key actors in the social movement. Through putting women in front, these researches attempt to show that instead of facing multiple barriers passively, the women are capable to lead their society and making a significant change (Sigiro, 2019). Locating women as social agents was also done in the religious field where women are considered subordinate. Bianca and Woodward were observing the practice of Muslim the feminist and their role

in the post-colonial nation. They argue that in facing feminist view, many researchers were often focusing on the Islamic scripture rather than the practice. Following Bianca and Woodward, Hamdi also observed the role of women in the *Pesantren* in Lombok where patriarchal culture was strongly maintained. He noticed that although the tradition of *Pesantren* is like a 'small kingdom' where the *kiai* or *Tuan guru* is the 'king' and the successor must be a male, but in the *Pesantren* Raehanun, the leadership passed to a female (Saiful hamdi, 2013). However, it is not without controversies. Many stances argue against this position based on Islamic jurisprudence. Through understanding the relationship between Islam and Sasak culture, Hamdi encourages a broad understanding of women position in the practice of nominal tradition, instead of deepening women's position in the scripture. The limitations of these researches are focusing to the privileged women in society. The underprivileged women in the rural area are having a limited discussion.

The last is religious literacy that is often defined as the capability to read, understand and criticize information (Ja'far 2019). In the context of Kajar village, this research defines religious literacy as the capability to know the rudimentary religious information such as knowing how to read Qur'an and knowing basic jurisprudence information related to basic life as Muslim, such as basic ablution (*tabarab*), and worship (*ubudiyyah*) and also criticizing the source that limits women's religious life. Here, Hannam (2020) problematizes the practice of religious literacy and religious education. However, he is still supporting the views that the purpose of literacy is to raise a critical question from religious doctrine, dogma, and policies (Hannam et al. 2020). As this research is based on participatory action research, the notion of education and literacy will be brought together both to educate and raise the awareness of women's rights in religious life.

## **Methods**

This study is using qualitative research and sociological approach to describe and investigate the agency of women in developing religious literacy. The data of this research were obtained through participatory action research (PAR). Which means the researcher was involved in the discussion, participated in the action and



investigated the progress of the action. As this is research based on action, it took about two months to participate in the activities and about a year to see the progress, to explore and compare the data. This long research is aimed to see the result of participation (Nazir 2014). Taking the data from early 2019 to the late 2020, the subjects of this action research are women who participate in the religious-learning activities in *Langgar* of Kajar. In this village there are three small mosques and six *Langgars* scattered in three hamlets, Kajar, Wuni and Jatimalang. However, among the six, there are only four *Langgar* actively used for religious activities. The results of this participatory action research were analyzed using the frame of agency to highlight the roles of women in empowering their community.

## **Result and Discussion**

### *Women, Poverty and Religious Illiteracy*

Based on statistics in 2019, the inhabitant in *Kajar* is about 1609 assembled in 450 family cards that consist of 795 male and 815 female (Kajar 2018). However, the data also show that the inhabitant living in the village is only 62% (1019), and many of them are women. Many men of this village are wandering to work in the big cities as cheap laborer such as in Surabaya, Semarang and Jakarta. The fact that *Kajar* was close to the forest, and under forestry program; the farmer could take advantage of the forest land to cultivate crops, such as corn and cassava, but still this scheme does not much help farmer economic development, especially for women.

In the village, women help her husband work on their land or they become cheap laborers for their neighbors. After they go home, they also work for household activities. For the women left by her husband to the cities, they will take care on their land and household along. This condition is normal in the context of Kajar where women play multi roles as economic helpers and household caretaker. However, this is not a surprising fact in Indonesia; Nursyahbani and Wierengga noted that the dual role of women was designed by New Order to impose the politic control over women body (Nursyahbani and Wierengga 2003). This maintains the remained faces of women in Indonesia which are close to dimension of poverty (Sohn 2015).



As Kajar village is close to poverty and inhabited by mostly women and children, they are also close to illiteracy. The number of inhabitants can be seen by comparing two diagrams as shown on Figure 1;

### Inhabitant

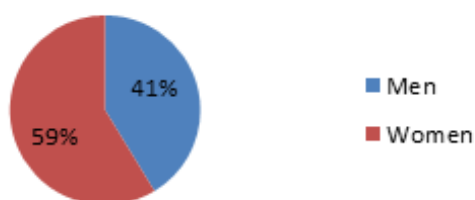


Figure1. The comparison between men and women reside in Kajar

Source: Author documentation

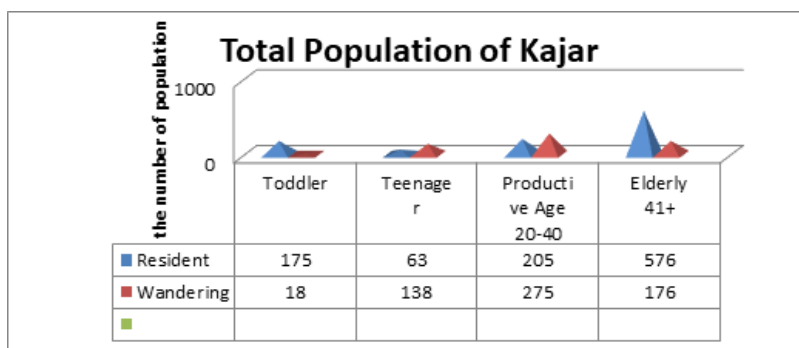


Figure2. The comparison between resident and the wandering based on Age

Source: Author documentation

Based on the diagram above, it portrays the social life in *Kajar* where women reside in the village and the men, especially the youth and productive age, go to cities for working and studying. Interestingly, this diagram number is also related to women's education. In the context of the village, men are expected to have better job, occupancy, and to lead their family, and therefore their education is well prepared. In the case of teenagers, boys are going to go to nearby cities not for earning money, but for pursuing better

education. However, the number of girls going to cities for education can be counted by only the finger in the right hand.

This portrayal confirms that in many places, the face of women is close to poverty and domestic worker (Bappeda 2019). Both in urban and in rural, women are considered as 'poor' and 'less able' or 'unable' (*kurang atau tidak mampu*) to earn more money than their counterparts. In research about educated women earning in urban areas, Ariane noted that women earning is still considered as secondary and additional to men income (Ariane 2008). On this point, women are still seen as dependent on the male members in economic and social aspects (Sohn, 2015). This condition is serious in the context of rural areas where women have no access of education and have no choices for their life. In the national level, this issue has much to do with government policies in empowering women. In the context of New Order, women were portrayed as figures that busily manage the household and obedience to their husbands. The ideas about women's nature (*kodrat perempuan*) has been massively disseminated within the building of the nation (Wierengga, 2003). Consequently, biological aspects of women were sexually, politically and economically controlled. However, in the post-Soeharto era, through the program *keluarga sakinah*, from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (MoWECP), women were constructed as figures that determine the harmony of the family. The role of women was still the same, as household to maintain a happy family to take care of their child and a religious-pious figure (MoWEPC 2011).

As far as my research, the lack of expectancy to have better work and education has also parallel in women's capability in knowing-understanding basic religious literacy, and also provide consistent evidence on the connection between poverty and inability. Through random surveys in 2019, it was said that almost the majority of married women did not know how to read the Qur'an properly. Although some of them could memorize the short surah of the Qur'an, but they did not even know the Arabic letter. For the teenagers, they had already known the Arabic letter, but to read in sequence words was still hard to do. Likewise their readings in Qur'an, many of married women also did not know how to read

the chanted *du'a* during five obligated prayer (*maktubah*), or to take *Wudhu* properly. A woman that I interviewed said that during the prayer, she only followed the movement from the Imam and her fellow. The surah that she memorizes is only al-Fatihah for it is repeated in every prayer. Indeed, she does not represent all women, but her honesty have me a partial image about the poor condition of religious education, especially for women in Kajar.

#### *Strategies on Developing Women Religious Literacy*

When the researcher arrived in Kajar in June 2019, in the mosque during Magrib prayer, there were only five men in the main area and nine women in the veranda. Although women prayer in a small veranda, the numbers of women praying in the mosque were always more than men in daily prayers; it was understandable since many of the residents were women. After praying Maghrib, children of boys and girls learnt to recite the Qur'an to the local *kiai*. Mostly the children were in elementary school (6th to 12th Years old). From the local *kiai*, the researcher was informed that to find a person who was willing to teach the Qur'an was hard to do. Many educated men went to cities and also they were reluctant to return to the village, so the local *kiai* could only teach boys. While for the girls, especially those who got period (about 9-10 years old), they had to learn the Qur'an in *Langgar*. However, the girls mostly stop learning the Qur'an because, during their period, they were prohibited to touch the Qur'an.

Based on this information, the researcher then summons basic information related to the women's capability and capacity in reciting the Qur'an and gathers basic information related to people understanding of basic Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Based on the data, there are some urgent problems in the village of Kajar. *First* is the lack of rural concern. As educated people from Kajar village prefer to move to nearby cities, and therefore the social condition in the village is neglected. *Second* is a strong assumption that girl's and women's actions are limited for their nature (*kodrat*), such as being economic helpers, cheap laborers and being followers (*makmum*) in religious activities. The vivid look of this assumption is that the narration on women's education and empowerment is a new idea for community.

This condition is typical of Indonesian generally where women's educations on religious domain are still limited. According to Syamsiyyatun that only in the mid of 1990s women began to break silent discourse of feminist issues. The educated women from Islamic universities such as State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) or State Islamic University (UIN) and *Pesantren* then began having academic capability and having similar position to the men intellectually (Siti Syamsiyatun, 2014). The result is that women have important position in Islamic organization such as in Muslimat (women organization of Nahdlatul Ulama for women), Aisyiah (an autonomous women organization in Muhammadiyah) and many respective organizations that focus on women empowerment.

As women's organizations in the cities are growing rapidly and massively, women in villages such as in *Kajar* are still facing gender primordial issues, especially in term of access to better education and religious learning. The researcher is aware that such issues are multidimensional and complex ranging from poverty to cultural-religious issues. However, the people especially women are not passively accepted the condition of being poor, disadvantaged and left behind. For example, in the three *Langgars*, there were activities of Qur'anic learning for children, but the participants were only five to seven pupils. Hence, the researcher then offered a pilot project for developing religious literacy and extending the participants who are not only pupils but also married women. This pilot project followed the big tradition of Muslimah organization in the field of women empowerment. Van Doorn narrated that women's religious organization from both NU and Muhammadiyah had successfully changed the face of women in Islam by building the tradition of reading the Qur'an (Van Doorn-Harder 2006). To replicate the idea, the researcher also ran the same strategies to build women religious literacy.

This researcher was then involved in the two significant strategies for the pilot project of empowering women in *Kajar*. These strategies were to overcome the religious-cultural barriers especially religious literacy, as mentioned previously that *Kajar* is home for significant number of illiteracy, especially for women. After dealing with the data, the researcher finds that in the nearby village there

were some passive Muslimat cadres of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) who could read the Qur'an properly and had enough basic religious literacy. Together with them, some strategies were made to improve women capacity in religious literacy. First is intensifying religious guiding, such as making the program for learning to recite the Qur'an for *Ibu-ibu* (marriage women). This program was held after Maghrib in *Langgar*, and this site was chosen for it was a permissible religious site for women even during their period. Another program was reading *Dzibaiyah* (Chant to praise the prophet) and Javanese chanting as well as playing *badrab* (a percussion music instrument) weekly. The purpose of this program was to introduce rich Islamic Javanese tradition and to invest women skill to improve their capability.

The most prioritized program was learning basic Islamic law, from *fiqih tabarah* (Islamic law for cleaning and ablution) to *fiqih ibadah* (worship). Although the learning was still introductory, the purpose was to introduce the basic point on the importance of *tabarah* and *ibadah* critically, such as giving them insight that the point of *taharah* is for the goodness of human being and it is rewarded in Islam. Keeping to nurture their dog is allowed in Islam, but we have to wash our hand for cleaning purpose and eating them is prohibited. In addition, the strategies of improving women's religious literacy did not neglect male involvement. Some male local *kiai*(s) were also involved in this pilot project. The basic consideration on this involvement was that the works of empowerment should have been balance, between men and women, boys and girls. Although, in this case, women and girls got more attention for they had been in disadvantage position.

The second strategies cultivated the ideas among communities that empowering and educating both male and female gave advantages for community. As far as my research among Muslim in *Kajar* that giving education to male is more advantageous than female. It can be seen that the number of early marriage among women, and life preference for women to work in domestic areas are part of sexiest preference among communities. Indeed, this sexiest preference is due to the capability and ability of men in earning money for finance outside their homeland and religious

performances in the religious site. However and surely, this sexist preference does not only neglect half member of society, but also burden all social-religious life to the men.

This strategy is by conducting series of discussions about early marriage among youth about equal right in marriage and the consequence of life after marriage. By targeting teenagers both male and female, the purpose of this pilot project was increasing a sense of self significance among the youths and giving them understanding for their preference and choices. The activities, where the researchers and teams were involved and participated in action, were held intensively for two months in *Langgar*, and there were about twenty women who joined the activities. The reason of taking *Langgar* as hub for religious learning was religious site that it was accessible for women during their period and to convince the women that religious site was accessible for both male and female. It also considered and respected the basic values within the community who considered the mosque as sacred place.

#### *The Advantage of Making Women as Agents*

Although in the village of Kajar, southern Rembang, women are vulnerable but they are also maneuverable and pilotable. Based on preliminary research, although the majority of people are Muslim, there were only about a few who were religiously literate. Literacy here is the ability to read the Qur'an properly, recite chant in daily prayer and know the basic knowledge of Islamic law (*fiqih*) of *tabarah* (purification) and *ubudiyyah* (worship). However, the basic religious knowledge has improved during the late of three years for women agency in continuing religious learning practices.

By locating women in front of empowerment agenda, it also equally distributes capabilities within societies (Klugman, 2014). Man and woman, boys and girls should realize about their potential capability so that they can participate in all aspects of life, including religious life. According to Lois Nay, at the small level, the women empowerment agenda needs agency by which the subject of empowerment is not passive, but actively considers in deciding their own actions for their own good (McNay, 2000). Therefore, in the context of social transformation, the idea of agency is close to

the idea of empowerment and in the context of participatory action research; the researcher is not only the third person. They should also involve in the work of empowerment. Therefore, this paper stands on the idea that the real transformation of social-religious life will effectively come from the bottom, from people that work together to create a significant change in society.

In the life of Kajar, a strong religious and cultural narration that puts women behind their men is quite common. Within the narration of “*suargo nunut neroko katut*” (To heaven follow, to hell follow) women has derogated into an object of the other that has no autonomous choice for their life. As happened then, the women’s choice should follow the rule obligated by their religious-cultural society (Triratnawati, 2005) which had different education and socio economic status. Dadi wong requires economic, religious, moral, psychological and physical aspects. Other aspects includes gender ideology and culture. According to the Javanese concept dadi wong means merely economic aspect. The ideal concept of Dadi wong should be combined with economic (economic independence, income. Therefore, the involvement of women in the *Langgar* to learn religious knowledge and make it as women basis religious activities must be taken seriously as a form of human agency. The agency of women comes up after being two months of intensive participation on developing religious literacy in the previous years. In this research, there are two instruments to measure the advantage of locating women as the agents for the transformation of religious life. *First* is constant participation among women in following and continuing the activities after the pilot project is due. The result is that in 2021, after two years, *Langgars* in Kajar were used for various religious-social activities with the women as key actors. For the example, the religious teaching for girls in reciting the Qur’an was held daily in *Langgar*, while that for boys are in mosque. Both *Langgar* and Mosque become “unofficial madrasah” where the community gets their knowledge from the religious site. Indeed, *langgar* then becomes a place for not only religious activities, but also social and economic activities. In *Langgar*, after praying, women are used to talk about the condition of their land, the price of field harvest and the plan for education of their children, which



meansthat there is no more disconnection between people and the religious site.

Making religious site, *Langgar*, as “unofficial madrasah” also brings the religious site into daily life of community. In addition, that woman, girl and boy can pray and learn in *Langgar* has reduced barrier for women to access the religious site and religious education. Interestingly, in the context of urban Indonesia, the condition where Muslim women become religious leader and have significant influence on society had been done since Soeharto regime (Van Doorn-Harder, 2006). However, in the context of remote area such as in Kajar, the ability of reading the Qur'an is still a privilege. Therefore, the habit of women reading the Qur'an as both religious and social activities in Kajar is also a milieu of social change.

The second instrument on the benefit of women agency is the capability of women in influencing their family, neighborhood and community to raise gender equality for religious life. This influence is successful through seeing the decline of young marriage and the raising number of girls going to cities to pursue better education. Although the exact number remains unclear, statistically the number has declined. According to my informants, there are still early marriages among girls, but the number of girls going to cities to pursue better education is bigger. This data is about to show that it needs multi years to accelerate education between the rural and the urban especially in the context of women education. Within this gradual change, the role of women as agents to influence their family and community cannot be neglected. Their voice must be narrated as an affirmation of hope that women in the rural-isolated village can be agents as urban women affiliated in religious organizations.

### **Conclusion**

After conducting research based on participation, this research views some important points on the relation between women agency and the religious site. First, in the context of rural- isolated remote area, women still had ‘dual role’ or ‘*peran ganda*’ in term that they worked for their family, but they also should have taken care on their household and maintained the harmony of their family. Indeed, in the context of Kajar village, these roles kept the women to work

in domestic area and maintain the dimension of poverty among them. This condition also has much to do with religious-cultural view seeing the women as secondary. What happened then is about multiple problems women face from economy, lack of purpose in education to equal rights on religious activities. In attempt to reduce barrier on the religious site, the researcher together with team and women affiliated to Muslimat conducted religious literacy for advancing women capabilities in reading and understanding religious text. Some guiding and discussions regarding equal right between male and female were also held for teenage. Two years after the pilot project was due, there are slightly change among society, especially in their religious life. The religious site such as *Langgar* is not only a place to conduct religious worship, but also 'unofficial madrasa' where the students, girls, boys and married women learn to recite the Qur'an. Although it is not significant, but the change and transformation give an insight that better investment for better future is on educating women, for their capability on influencing their family, community and their future generations.

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