



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Elderly Women and Sustainable Development (Study of Elderly Women's Activities on Social Media in Religious-Based Groups)

Soetji Lestari^{1*}, Edy Suyanto²

^{1,2} Department of Sociolog, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman Purwokerto, Indonesia

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***Corresponding Author:**

soetji.lestari@unsoed.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Elderly women are generally faced with limited resources in the socio-economic sector but they have relatively high levels of social media access. This demographic is increasingly required to adapt to technological advancements that demand the ability to access social media. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the activities of elderly women in utilizing social media within the Majelis Taklim Purwokerto, a small city in Indonesia. A descriptive qualitative method was adopted, focusing on elderly women aged 60 and above who were members or administrators of the Majelis Taklim Purwokerto study group. The participants were thoroughly selected using the purposive sampling method. Data collection involved in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), with data analyzed interactively. The study design began with social preparation, followed by exploring primary data on elderly women's interaction with social media through in-depth interviews and FGDs. The collected data were then analyzed and interpreted to generate insight. The results showed that elderly women in the Majelis Taklim actively and extensively use social media, primarily for religious purposes. These activities had a positive impact across various aspects of life, including social, economic, spiritual, and scientific contexts. However, a negative impact was the lack of courtesy from younger generations toward their elders, as observed in social media interactions. Elderly women used various social media platforms and devices, such as mobile phones, laptops, the internet, and Instagram, despite generally low socio-economic conditions. In summary, the use of social media among elderly women in the Majelis Taklim had shown positive contributions, supporting their personal and community development.

INTRODUCTION

Global development aimed at improving human welfare is considered to be an important agenda for nations worldwide. The agenda is encapsulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a program comprising 17 goals, 169 measurable targets, and 230 indicators. These were collectively agreed upon by 193 member countries, including Indonesia, and have been in effect since 2015, succeeding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The SDGs operate on three fundamental principles, including (a) Inclusivity: Ensuring that no one is left behind by involving all stakeholders and benefiting everyone, particularly vulnerable groups. (b) Universality: Adopting a comprehensive, human-centered method that upholds democracy, individual rights, peace, and partnerships. (c) Integration: Promoting harmony across social, economic, and environmental dimensions.

The advent of social media and technological advancements, particularly mobile phones, the internet, and digital tools, has significantly transformed societal perceptions of technology. Social media, once perceived as predominantly male-oriented, has evolved into a platform inclusive of women. According to Setiansah (2018), the integration of the internet and digital tools have redefined women's relationship with technology. Women now utilize these tools not only for access but also as instruments for gender advocacy, societal transformation, and community empowerment in developmental initiatives (Lestari, 2020).

Population data highlighted the growing importance of addressing the needs of elderly individuals, both men and women, as their numbers rise in absolute and proportional terms. According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) (2023), Indonesia entered the aging population category in 2021, with approximately one in ten individuals classified as elderly. Under favorable conditions, this demographic shift can present a demographic bonus, specifically when elderly individuals remain active and productive. Conversely, it may pose challenges when the aging population experiences health or socio-economic difficulties.

As defined by Law Number 13 of 1998, elderly individuals are those aged 60 years and older. Their increasing numbers show advancements in the health sector, marked by longer life expectancy and reduced mortality rates. This demographic trend influences various fields, including health, the economy, socio-culture, and technology. Properly addressing the needs of such a population can significantly contribute to achieving sustainable development (BPS, 2020).

Based on data from the BPS in 2020, elderly individuals in Indonesia constituted 9.27% of the total population. This growing demographic group requires focused attention and tailored care. Singarimbun (1996) reported that elderly individuals demand special concern for several reasons. These reasons included (1) the demographic group is often in vulnerable conditions, necessitating proper care and support. (2) Ethically and morally, elderly individuals deserve recognition and gratitude for their contributions to society. (3) The demographic group should be allowed to live comfortably in their old age, free from social discrimination. (4) The increasing number of elderly individuals, driven by improved life expectancy, has significant socio-economic implications. (5) Changes in population structures influence family and household dynamics, thereby affecting the welfare of the elderly, specifically in the context of modern development (Maulida *et al.*, 2021).

In the current era of technological advancement and widespread use of social media, elderly women face the need to adapt to these developments in their daily lives. While elderly women may seek rest in the later years, the demands of modernization encourage them to remain engaged and adapt to new tools like social media. For instance, members and administrators of the Majelis Taklim in Berkoh Purwokerto, comprising mostly elderly women aged 60 and above, actively participate in social activities despite their age. Economically and educationally, this demographic group in Indonesia often faces challenges. The average length of schooling for elderly women is 4.75 years (equivalent to not completing elementary school), compared to 6.24 years for elderly men (who typically graduate from elementary school). Despite this educational disparity, many elderly women own mobile phones and actively use the internet to support their social engagements.

While their use of mobile phones may not be as extensive as that of younger generations, elderly women show significant adaptability by frequently utilizing such devices. This development is important in the modernization era, where elderly women were previously perceived as less "active." However, their high level of productivity in using mobile phones challenges such a perception. The increasing use of mobile phones among elderly Indonesians shows their ability to navigate technological changes, bridging the gap between traditional lifestyles and modern tools. The percentage of the demographic group accessing mobile phones is presented in the following table.

Table 1. Percentage of Indonesian Elderly Accessing Information and Communication Technology, 2019 - 2023

Year	The Use of Mobile Phones	Internet Access	The Use of Computers
2019	43.08	7.94	1.55
2020	46.68	11.44	1.47
2021	46.79	14.10	1.46
2022	49.39	19.42	1.83
2023	49.56	22.87	1.71

Data source: Central Statistics Agency, 2023

When social interactions were limited, the percentage of elderly women using mobile phones and accessing the internet increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (Table 1). Elderly women, traditionally viewed as less educated and technologically inexperienced, are now showing a shift in their engagement with technology. According to Setiansah (2018), a new dynamic has surfaced in the relationship between elderly women and digital technology. This demographic group not only has a growing familiarity with digital tools, particularly social media but also leverages them for self-actualization and gender advocacy. Social media has become an instrument for personal transformation and empowerment. The common perception associates elderly women's social media activities with religious purposes. However, societal gender constructions often subject women to injustices such as marginalization, stereotyping, violence, and disproportionate workloads compared to men (Dewi, 2020). Therefore, this study aims to present a novel perspective by examining the role of gender in elderly women's social media activities, particularly those within the Majelis Taklim group.

This study aims to analyze how elderly women in Berkoh Purwokerto, Indonesia, utilize social media despite their advanced age. Although these women may no longer be considered productive in conventional terms, they remain highly respected assets to society, contributing valuable experience to social and religious development.

METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative method with the consideration that the results were expected to be more in-depth. Data collection involved conducting in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with elderly women in the Majelis Taklim group. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling method (non-probability). To validate the data, source triangulation was adopted, targeting key individuals such as the Head of the Neighborhood Association, the Head of the Majelis Taklim, and the Head of the Takmir of the Al-Ikhlas Mosque in Berkoh. The Majelis Taklim Berkoh Purwokerto was selected because it was one of the most active groups engaging in various social and religious activities. The data were analyzed using an interactive analysis based on the framework of Milles and Huberman.

Elderly Women's Activities on Social Media such as Mobile Phones, the Internet, and Instagram Support Sustainable Development

Sustainable development, as outlined in the SDGs, covered targets such as increasing social media access for all societal groups, particularly elderly women. Another key target was to provide internet access to every village, ensuring inclusivity at all levels of society (BPS, 2020).

The elderly, defined as individuals born around 1960 or earlier, grew up in an era dominated by "conventional technology" and were often regarded as a group less familiar with modern communication tools, including social media. According to Susenas (2018), social media access included the use of mobile phones, computers, and the Internet. Among these, mobile phones were

the most widely used by elderly women as the tools closely related to their daily activities. Data from 2019 showed that four out of ten elderly women used mobile phones regularly (BPS, 2019).

National statistics highlighted a significant gender disparity in social media usage between elderly men and women, particularly regarding mobile phone access. The development of the internet and digital tools have significantly reshaped the perception of technology, transitioning it from being male-dominated to becoming more accessible and user-friendly for women. This shift have fostered a new dynamic between women and technology. Setiansah (2018) reported that in recent developments, social media, specifically the internet and digital tools, have constructed a transformative relationship between women and technology, empowering them in various capacities.

An administrator of the Majelis Taklim Berkoh group, Mrs. IDM, a 60-year-old gold entrepreneur, shared her perspective on the role of mobile phones in her daily life.

“... my daily activities revolve around running a gold shop and managing the Majelis Taklim Berkoh study group. Currently, I live with my husband, two household assistants, and a driver, as my three children are studying out of town. For me, mobile phones play an essential role not only in supporting my business but also in facilitating learning, religious practices, and social interactions. At my age, I prioritize using mobile phones for meaningful purposes, such as accessing the latest information through videos and news. Socializing is also an integral part of my life, and I maintain connections through alumni groups from elementary school, junior high, senior high, and college. Furthermore, mobile phones are invaluable for religious activities, including monitoring member participation, supervising study sessions, and staying updated on members' well-being, specifically when someone is sick or has passed away. We have also established a Majelis Taklim WhatsApp Group to coordinate these activities. I actively participate in political discussions as I believe they are important for mental stimulation and preventing cognitive decline. All members of the Majelis Taklim use mobile phones with internet access, and for those who cannot afford them, we provide support through cash or donations. Our interactions foster a sense of family among us, particularly as elderly individuals. Above all, mobile phones are tools for positivity, strengthening brotherhood, and enhancing connections among administrators and members of the Majelis Taklim...”

This statement highlighted how elderly women not only utilize mobile phones and social media but also leverage them as tools for empowerment, gender advocacy, and fostering social solidarity. The results were in line with Arjuna and Boby Nurmagandi (2023), who reported that social media and mobile phones contributed to improving the well-being of elderly women and their families.

The analysis from the FGDs at the Al-Ikhlâs Mosque, which involved analysts and approximately 18 administrators and members of the Majelis Taklim group, concluded that elderly women consistently utilize mobile phones for positive and meaningful purposes. These activities included interacting with school alumni (from elementary to college), participating in study organizations, *dasa wisma* groups, PKK activities, and more. Most social media groups for elderly women, particularly on WhatsApp, were based on familial ties, neighborhood organizations, local communities, study groups (Majelis Taklim), exercise groups, school alumni networks, and religious organizations. Additionally, mobile phones were often used for personal purposes, such as watching educational videos and keeping up with consumer goods, food, and clothing.

Mrs. FRD, a 62-year-old widow, retired bank employee, and current administrator of the Majelis Taklim group, shared the following about her mobile phone use.

“...in my daily activities, I rely heavily on my mobile phone to communicate with my children in Bandung and Yogyakarta. My activities often involve using the mobile phone for religious, social, and family-related matters outside the island, as my late husband and I are originally from Padang. For instance, I have communicated daily with my 87-year-old mother in Padang since my father passed away five years ago. I

also use my mobile phone for religious worship and social engagements within WhatsApp Groups, such as the Majelis Taklim group, the Hamlet Association, and school friends. Additionally, I monitor health conditions, political updates, and other topics to stay informed and broaden my knowledge. For entertainment, I watch videos on health, religion, and similar subjects to avoid loneliness since I now live alone. My mobile phone also helps me gain knowledge from the internet, particularly for positive purposes. As an elderly woman, I find it essential to maintain engagement, avoid feelings of loneliness, and prevent memory decline. Bismillah, I aim to use this tool wisely and meaningfully..."

The statement above was in line with Donna Haraway's perspective (as cited by Ganito, 2012) that technology could empower women and foster gender transformation. Therefore, it was crucial to examine how elderly women use social media, specifically mobile phones, to support personal development despite their advancing age.

Interviews conducted with 28 administrators and members of the Majelis Taklim Berkoh Purwokerto, Banyumas Regency, showed various activities that elderly women carry out using social media, particularly mobile phones and the internet. The detailed activities were presented in Table 2, with each participant providing multiple responses.

Table 2. Activities of Elderly Women in Using Social Media and the Internet

No.	Daily Activities of Elderly Women in Social Media	Frequency (Number)	Percentage (%)*
1.	Strengthening family relations	24	87.15
2.	Religious activities (Study sessions)	28	100.00
3.	Gaining knowledge	12	42.86
4.	Strengthening brotherhood	10	35.72
5.	Communicating with children in other cities	13	46.43
6.	Reducing loneliness to prevent forgetfulness	20	71.43
7.	Communicating for organizational activities	18	64.29
8.	A means of entertainment (watching videos)	11	39.29

Source: Primary Data, processed

Note *): **(Answers can be more than one)**

Based on Table 2, the daily activities of elderly women in the Majelis Taklim group using social media, particularly mobile phones and the internet, were highly diverse. Their primary motivations included participating in religious activities, strengthening friendships, alleviating loneliness caused by living alone, staying informed, communicating with distant relatives, reconnecting with school friends, and other similar purposes. While the use of mobile phones and the internet offered numerous positive impacts, it presented some unintended negative consequences.

Mrs. MNW, a 58-year-old administrator of the Majelis Taklim who works as a trader and manages a shop, shared her perspective on this issue.

"... in my opinion, every activity involving mobile phones and the internet among elderly women comes with both expected benefits and unforeseen drawbacks. Before the advent of social media, such as mobile phones and the internet, I frequently visited my siblings living in other cities. At least once a year, particularly during Eid al-Fitr, I would return to my hometown for family visits. However, with the availability of social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and others, I have become 'lazy' about traveling to visit relatives. Now, these visits are often replaced by online interactions

through WhatsApp video calls, Zoom, or Google Meet. While these methods save time, reduce costs, and avoid physical exhaustion, they lack the personal satisfaction of in-person visits. This, I believe, is one of the negative impacts of mobile phones and social media. As members of society, we must adapt to technological advancements to avoid being left behind in this rapidly evolving era. Refusing to keep up with these changes means risking isolation from the progress brought about by development. That is my perspective on the advantages and disadvantages of social media, including mobile phones, the internet, WhatsApp, Instagram, video calls, Zoom, and Google Meet.....”

This statement showed the mixed impacts of social media, particularly mobile phones and internet-based platforms, on elderly women’s lives in the modern era. For further details, Table 3 below summarized the results from 28 participants regarding the negative impacts of using mobile phones, the internet, Instagram, video calls, Zoom, and Google Meet, with each participant identifying the most dominant negative aspect.

The results contrasted with the study by Selly Anjely, Ari Rahmat Aziz, and Widia Lestari (2023), indicating that elderly women often faced challenges in adopting new communication methods through social media. These challenges reduced their interest in and attention to such platforms. Other obstacles included the lack of clear text explanations for social media features, which further diminished their motivation to engage with social media (Wuriyanti, 2022). Similarly, Wuriyanti (2022) found that elderly individuals generally perceived a low urgency to use social media, except when communicating with family or friends. In line with the results, elderly women predominantly use mobile phones more to communicate with their families.

Table 3. Negative Impacts of Elderly Women's Activities in Using Social Media such as Mobile phones, the Internet, and Instagram

No.	Negative Impacts of Elderly Women's Activities in Using Social Media	Frequency (Number)	Percentage (%)
1.	The emergence of individualism and selfishness	2	7.14
2.	Lack of face-to-face interaction	6	21.43
3.	Decreased approach to social aspects	3	10.71
4.	Reduced sense of closeness	4	14.29
5.	Dissatisfaction with maintaining relations	5	17.86
6.	Lack of respect for elders	8	28.57
	TOTAL	28	100.00

Source: Processed Primary Data

Based on Table 3, the selected participants identified the primary negative impacts of social media as the reduction in face-to-face interactions and less effective social bonding. Other significant drawbacks included a decline in courtesy toward elders and dissatisfaction when Eid celebrations occur solely through digital communication.

Mrs. ADP, a 61-year-old member of the Majelis Taklim who was actively involved in various organizations, shared her perspective on social media usage.

“...in terms of social media and mobile phones, I am an active user of Instagram, Facebook, the internet, and WhatsApp Groups. I am part of 21 WhatsApp Groups and always keep my mobile phone close, from waking up to going to sleep. Without it, I feel like something is missing. Every morning when I wake up, I immediately check my mobile phone for WhatsApp messages, both group and personal chats, as well as updates from the internet and Instagram. I use the internet to browse for items such as clothes, shoes, headscarves, and jackets, as well as to monitor food prices and

developments. On WhatsApp Groups, I stay updated with the latest information, even when I do not actively participate in conversations. I also follow religious teachings and political updates online and watch various videos, including those related to religion, for entertainment and knowledge enhancement. For me, having my mobile phone nearby is essential. When I am without it or when my internet package runs out, I feel unsettled, as though something important is missing. Despite this dependency, I ensure that I use my mobile phone for positive activities. These cover utilizing social media platforms such as mobile phones, the internet, Instagram, and Facebook in my daily life..”.

Banyumas Regency presented a unique demographic feature, with the proportion of middle-aged and older elderly women (aged 75 and above) reaching 26.28%, significantly higher than the provincial and national levels. Data from the Banyumas Regency Statistics Agency (BPS) indicated that the highest age group was 75 years and older. For a clearer understanding, Table 4 provided details on the proportion of elderly individuals in Banyumas Regency.

Table 4. The Proportion of Elderly Population in Banyumas Regency in 2019 Based on Gender and Age Group

AGE GROUP (YEARS)	M	%	F	%	M + F	%
Young Elderly 1 (60 – 64 years)	41.385	35.80	39.706	32.93	81.091	4.33
Young Elderly 2 (65 – 69 years)	30.303	26.21	28.668	23.77	58.971	24.97
Middle Elderly 1 (70 – 74 years)	18.571	16.06	20.528	17.02	39.099	16.55
Middle and Old Elderly (75+ years)	25.342	21.92	31.690	26.28	57.032	24.15
Number of Elderly	115.601	100.00	120.592	100,00	236.193	100.00
Proportion of Elderly	13.78		14.34		14.07	

Source: Banyumas Regency BPS, 2020.

Table 4 highlighted that the proportion of middle and older elderly women in Banyumas Regency (26.28%) surpassed both provincial and national averages. According to BPS data, the highest age structure fell within the 75 years and above category, making it challenging to further disaggregate data for the elderly group (aged 80 and above) (Arjuni, 2023).

This demographic data offered valuable insights for creating a comprehensive database of the elderly population categorized by gender. The mapping served as a foundation for formulating policy strategies and showed the potential of the growing elderly population to contribute to a gender-sensitive and inclusive society.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study on gender and elderly women’s activities at the Majelis Taklim Berkoh Purwokerto showed that these women were generally active users of social media platforms, including mobile phones, the internet, Instagram, and Facebook, with a relatively high frequency. Their use of social media have a positive impact on various aspects of life, such as social, economic, religious, and educational spheres. Social media helped strengthen social bonds, allowed for reminiscing about school and college days, and served as a tool for monitoring the prices of daily necessities, particularly for a small subset of elderly women. Furthermore, it provided opportunities for acquiring knowledge, offered entertainment, alleviated loneliness, and facilitated connections with family members. The activities of these elderly women generally did not have any unexpected negative consequences and did not disrupt social, economic, or religious life within the society. In fact, the positive impacts of social media usage were more dominant among the elderly women of the Majelis Taklim. Additionally, the results highlighted that the proportion of elderly women in this development was significant and warranted special attention, specifically in light of the existing gender gap. The primary gender gap pertained to the roles of men and women across all groups.

Despite this, the use of social media by elderly women, including mobile phones, the internet, Instagram, and Facebook, remained relatively high.

This study was limited by time and resource constraints, suggesting the need for further investigations. Future investigations should focus on educating and raising awareness among elderly women, specifically in Majelis Taklim Purwokerto, about the responsible use of mobile phones. This initiative would help minimize the negative effects of social media and prevent the spread of misinformation. Additionally, it was crucial to raise awareness of the Information and Electronic Transactions (ITE) law among elderly women.

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