



Strengthening the Nagari Koto Tengah Islamic Study Group in Tilkam Subdistrict, Agama Regency, Through Training on Funeral Arrangements

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ABSTRACT

The handling of the deceased is one of the obligatory acts of worship classified as a *fardhu kifayah*. Not all Muslims possess the skills to wash, shroud, and perform the funeral prayer for the deceased; typically, these duties are entrusted to those who are experts and accustomed to performing them. However, it is also important for every Muslim to know and understand these religious laws, at least for the purpose of handling the funeral of close relatives. To provide insight to those who have not yet mastered this knowledge, a training session was conducted involving the Majelis Taklim in Kanagarian Koto Tengah, Tilatang Kamang Subdistrict, Agam Regency. This was done in anticipation of a shortage of funeral organizers in the area. Several studies indicate that community service programs based on Majelis Taklim focusing on funeral arrangements remain limited. This initiative aims to enrich existing efforts while addressing a different subject area. The methodology employs a Participatory Action Research approach, utilizing lectures and demonstrations. In this community service project, two major patterns were identified: the importance of strengthening literacy and demonstrations aimed at fostering habitual practices within a religious activity that is often performed on an ad hoc basis. The training on funeral arrangements for the Majelis Taklim in Koto Tengah Village has resulted in a task force that is on standby at all times to provide services to families experiencing bereavement.

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Introduction

Majelis taklim is a social organization that has grown and flourished within Indonesian society, from the grassroots level up to the national level (Dahlan, 2019). This has established the organization as an institution that plays a vital role in the character development of its members and other stakeholders. Until now, these organizations—which



are predominantly led and initiated by women—have primarily focused on religious study sessions organized from the sub-district level up to the national level (Jadidah, 2016). Meanwhile, the presence of this organization within society carries significant influence, so the public's expectation that the organization should make a greater contribution to the community is highly needed (Huda, 2020; Solihat et al., 2023). The community's need for such a role includes the members' ability to provide religious services such as funeral arrangements, social service activities, and organizing aid for the poor and orphans.

Several studies on the activities of majelis taklim have shown that their role in society is currently limited to spreading Islam through large-scale tabligh and da'wah (Anwar & Firdaus, 2023; Setiawati, 2012). This situation calls for higher education institutions to become involved in addressing the more urgent role of majelis taklim within the community (Rusiadi & Aslan, 2023). This community service initiative will enhance the capacity and capabilities of majelis taklim within the community, particularly in Kanagarian Koto Tengah, Tilatang Kamang Subdistrict, Agam Regency, West Sumatra.

The objective of this community service initiative is to address the shortage of funeral service providers that comply with the requirements of Islamic law. One entity capable of meeting this challenge is a structured institution whose mission and organizational framework are rooted in religious and social service principles. The selection of majelis taklim organizations for this community service project was made after a screening process involving several religious organizations active in the community, such as mosque youth groups, BKPRMI, and the Ulama Council. Majelis taklim organizations were chosen because their role in the community is more accessible and closely aligned with the interests of the general public.

This community service initiative will have a highly significant socio-religious impact, both on an individual level (as it constitutes a form of worship) and on a social level (since the arrangement of funeral rites is a public obligation—that is, the social responsibility is fulfilled once it has been carried out by a single individual; *fardu kifayah*). The contribution of this service will influence the role of higher education institutions as entities responsible for the continuity of academic and intellectual life on campus. The benefits of this service will be felt by the general public, who consistently entrust their religious matters—from birth to death—to those with expertise in the field, namely religious scholars and academics who understand the religious challenges they face.

Methods



The community service approach used in this project is Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is a community service model that seeks to link the community service process to the process of social change (Ridha et al., 2025). The social change in question refers to how the empowerment process can achieve three benchmarks: the existence of a shared commitment with the community, the presence of local leaders within the community, and the establishment of new community institutions built based on local needs. This community service project involves a process of accompaniment within the community's sphere of interest, identifying practical solutions to shared problems and issues requiring collective action and reflection, and contributing to practical theory (Agus Afandi, 2022).

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach is used to ensure that the target community is not treated as an object, but rather as the subject of the service project (Zunaidi, 2024). The Majelis Taklim of Kanagarian Koto Tengah itself understands, identifies, and resolves the problems it faces. The role of the researcher is more that of a facilitator for the members of the Majelis Taklim, providing solutions and formulating strategies that can be used to find solutions to their problems. However, the formulation of these solutions and strategies still involves the Majelis Taklim administrators, with the hope that after this training is completed, they will know the proper procedures for handling the deceased in accordance with Islamic law, moving away from traditions that actually contradict the Sharia-compliant procedures.

The steps taken in carrying out this community service project were as follows:

1. Interviews with the leaders of the Majelis Taklim; this was prompted by reports from mosque officials in one of the villages regarding a shortage of skilled funeral service providers (Suherman, 2026; Yulita, 2026).
2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD): Following the investigation of the report, a group discussion was held with stakeholders, including the Village Head, the Nagari MUI, community leaders, and the Islamic study group committee members who would conduct the funeral service training.
3. Conducting the funeral service training: The activity was carried out in the form of a workshop attended by 30 participants and led by one facilitator.

The methods used in the training program include lectures and demonstrations. The lectures are delivered by experts in Islamic jurisprudence who have extensive experience in funeral arrangements. The lecture topics include an explanation of a Muslim's obligations toward the



deceased and the wisdom behind funeral arrangements. Meanwhile, demonstrations are used to demonstrate the techniques of preparing shrouds to wrap the deceased, how to wash the deceased, shroud the deceased, as well as a demonstration of the funeral prayer (Rahmaliya et al., 2023). With this method, it is hoped that participants will be able to understand, practice, and apply the knowledge they have mastered during the training.

Results

Funeral Planning Literacy

In the performance of a specific act of worship, mastery of the relevant knowledge is an absolute requirement that must be met by the person performing the act. The conduct of funeral rites falls under the category of obligatory acts of worship that are of a collective nature; that is, once these rites have been performed by one person or a group of people, the obligation for those around them is fulfilled. Literacy in funeral arrangements includes reciting the intention (*niyat*), prayers during the activities of washing the body, shrouding, performing the funeral prayer, and during the burial, particularly when placing the body into the grave. In addition to the recitation-based aspects, the congregation organizing the funeral must also possess practical skills in cutting the cloth used to wrap the body, wrapping the body, washing the body, performing the funeral prayer, as well as knowledge of the grave-digging process, constructing the coffin within the grave, and finally, burying the body. The following table illustrates several forms of literacy used in the funeral service workshop at the Majelis Taklim Kanagarian Koto Tangah in Tilatang Kamang Subdistrict, Agam Regency.

Table 1. Literacy in Funeral Arrangements



Table 1 illustrates the importance of literacy in the performance of Islamic worship, whether it be obligatory acts classified as fardu ain or fardu kifayah. Without knowing, understanding, and memorizing these recitations, the acts of worship performed will be invalid or nullified. In conducting funeral rites, the required knowledge includes the recitation of intentions for each stage of the ceremony; the recitation differs depending on whether the deceased is male or female. In addition to this knowledge, the procedures or sequence of the funeral rites are equally important. With the help of a handbook compiled by the resource person, the participants gained a clear understanding of the sequence and steps to be followed during the funeral proceedings.

Workshop on Funeral Arrangements

Conducting a funeral is a religious practice that requires skill and is performed repeatedly over an indefinite period of time. To carry out this activity, in addition to mastering the requirements and essential elements and memorizing the texts related to all procedures and rituals, a person who will conduct a funeral must already be familiar with the flow and sequence of the funeral proceedings. The following table outlines the procedures for conducting a funeral according to its various stages.

Table 2. Workshop on Funeral Arrangements





D



E



F

Figure A shows the committee’s preparations for conducting a workshop on funeral arrangements. The equipment includes chairs and tables for participants to use during the learning session, as well as practical materials for the funeral simulation, such as a dummy body, shroud, lime, camphor, scissors, soap, and a bucket with a dipper. Figure B illustrates the involvement of stakeholders in the activity’s implementation, including mosque administrators, representatives of the Ulama Council, the organizing committee, and community leaders. Figure C depicts the sequence of the funeral preparation training, beginning with an explanation of the procedures for conducting a funeral from start to finish; during this stage, the presenter explains the wisdom and obligations of Muslims regarding the deceased. Figure D shows a demonstration of bathing the deceased using a mannequin, complete with an explanation of the etiquette for handling the deceased during the bathing process. Figure E illustrates the procedure for preparing the shrouds to be used for each deceased person, whether male or female. Meanwhile, Figure F depicts the practical application of funeral arrangements by the participants based on the material previously explained by the speaker.

Table 2 outlines the workshop process for funeral arrangements, covering preparation, stakeholder involvement, presentations by resource persons, and practical exercises by participants following their training in funeral arrangements. Preparations were carried out by the organizing committee, which provided the necessary equipment—including furniture for participant use—as well as props such as a body mannequin, bathing supplies, and shrouds. Once all participants had arrived, the event was opened by one of the stakeholders,



who expressed deep appreciation for the organization of the event. Through this initiative, the community, congregation, and Muslim faithful are now better prepared to face unforeseen tragedies. Following the opening ceremony, the session continued with a presentation by a speaker invited from a member of the District Ulama Council. The material was delivered verbally, beginning with an explanation of the handbook that had been distributed by the organizing committee. Once all participants had read and understood the information provided, the speaker then explained the procedures for preparing shrouds for male and female bodies. Once the shrouds were spread out, the process of washing the deceased was demonstrated by the speaker, assisted by several participants. Next, the speaker explained and demonstrated how to wrap the deceased in the spread-out shrouds. The workshop concluded with a practical session on wrapping the deceased.

Discussion

The initiative to strengthen religious study groups through training in funeral rites was carried out in two phases. The first phase focused on improving literacy regarding the texts used in funeral rites, utilizing a handbook distributed to participants. Second, by demonstrating the stages of funeral arrangements, starting from preparing the shroud, washing the body, shrouding the body, up to performing the funeral prayer. These two stages were carried out over one day, involving competent and experienced speakers in conducting funeral arrangements. Participants, consisting of members of the majelis taklim congregation along with several male participants, took the activities seriously. To ensure a deeper understanding, every step of the process was recorded, thoroughly documented, and shared via a WhatsApp group. Through this method, it is hoped that all participants will become key contributors during times of grief within their communities.

Strengthening literacy in the learning process is an absolute requirement for the success of any education and training program (Kaharuddin et al., 2025). In the implementation of training on funeral procedures, there are several forms of literacy that trainees must master. First, the recitation of the intention, which differs for each deceased person, whether male or female. Recitations in Arabic are certainly preferred over those in Indonesian. Second, the specific phrases used in each procedure of funeral rites, such as when first sprinkling water on the body and at the end of the washing ritual, when placing the body into the grave, and during the stage of supporting the body with a clod of earth at the head, hips, and feet. Third, specifically regarding the recitations during the funeral prayer at each takbir. Congregants participating in the funeral prayer are required to recite the verses during each takbir, as the funeral prayer is performed in a whisper (the imam does not recite aloud), so each congregant shares the same obligation to recite the verses during each takbir of the funeral prayer, at a minimum the short recitations. Good literacy skills serve as a fundamental foundation for a Muslim in



facing all situations, even though the conduct of a funeral may occur at an unexpected time (Azizah et al., 2025).

The demonstration method in a training session is expected to serve as a means of accelerating the transfer of knowledge from the instructor to the trainees (Fitriani et al., 2020; Kaharuddin et al., 2025). There are three stages of demonstration in funeral preparation training: first, the technique for cutting the shroud fabric to be used for shrouding male and female bodies. There are significant differences in the number of fabric pieces and the shroud models used for men and women. For a male body, two pieces of wrapping cloth are sufficient, plus one piece of clothing, a sarong, and one piece of deta cloth to cover the head. Meanwhile, for a female body, in addition to two pieces of cloth to cover the entire body, one piece of clothing, a headscarf, and a sarong are required. The techniques for preparing these items must be demonstrated and repeatedly practiced by participants using the materials they have, so that this skill can be applied anytime and anywhere. The second demonstration is the practice of bathing the deceased; at this stage, the focus is on the sequence of the bathing procedure, from the first rinse until the final step of lifting the body to be shrouded. The cleanliness of the body must be directly proportional to its sanctity, accompanied by prayers constantly recited in the hearts of everyone involved in the bathing process.

Several community service projects have been carried out by previous volunteers regarding training in funeral arrangements. Among them was a project by Kaharuddin and colleagues in Sukajaya Village; this project involved village residents, though it did not specify which segments of the community participated in the training or the material presented (Kaharuddin et al., 2025). Meanwhile, Irawan and Munadi conducted funeral management training to unify opinions regarding differences in the implementation of funeral management in Pendawan Village, Sambas District (Irawan & Munadi, 2021). Meanwhile, Rimang and colleagues conducted training for youth within the Muhammadiyah community in Makassar City (Rimang et al., 2024). Among these three forms of community service related to funeral service training, there is a gap between the current service provider and the three previous ones, specifically regarding the target audience of the training, the training's orientation, and the understanding of the importance of mastering funeral service skills.

This community service initiative highlights the need for strategic measures to support all forms of organizational capacity-building within the community. Social service-oriented community service is particularly needed when segments of society have become complacent and indifferent toward social solidarity. Further community service efforts are required to understand how religious organizations can provide solutions to problems within the community. Additionally, policymakers can design interventions that provide incentives in the form of material support for each organizational activity. Collaboration between



traditional leaders, religious figures, and policymakers can yield inclusive solutions that ensure social, cultural, and religious sustainability. This approach is not only relevant for Majelis Taklim organizations but also serves as a model for other communities engaged in similar movements.

Conclusion

This study identifies two main findings related to the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. First, the importance of literacy in the practice of religious teachings, particularly obligatory acts of worship, whether they are fardhu ayn or fardhu kifayah. Without knowing, understanding, and memorizing the recitations for these acts of worship, the performance of the prescribed religious duties will be invalidated. Second, the sustainability of an activity whose importance is not scheduled but is tentative, depending on events that occur and are unpredictable. These two findings indicate that the practice of conducting funeral rites is a socio-religious act of worship with individual and social impacts that must be undertaken by at least one group within a larger community, so that social responsibility can be fulfilled by this minority elite.

The findings of this community service project make an important contribution to the Community Service Team, which will engage with the community to provide guidance, support, and promote a central vision aimed at bringing about change, making a meaningful contribution, and addressing the needs of a community deserving of such service. Strengthening literacy at the outset will open the door to implementing concrete steps—namely, practices that are sharia-compliant and absolutely in accordance with established religious teachings. The combination of literacy with repeated practice will enhance skills in mastering technical knowledge. This training has established a task force ready to provide funeral services for families struck by tragedy under sudden or unforeseen circumstances.

This study has significant limitations related to differing perspectives within the schools of Islamic jurisprudence, which form the basis for funeral rites. The diversity of fiqh interpretations among scholars and the faithful has resulted in delays in formulating teachings that can be agreed upon for practice. Nevertheless, this situation opens opportunities for future researchers to reach out to different communities with teachings that align with what they understand and practice.

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