



Internalization of Ethical Values in Women's Prayer Gatherings: A Living Quran Study

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Abstract

This study examines the internalization of ethical values in religious gatherings within Muslim women's prayer communities, analyzed through the Living Quran perspective. Using a descriptive qualitative method, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving active participants. The findings indicate that ethical principles such as providing space for others, maintaining courtesy, showing respect, and attentive listening are consistently practiced in these gatherings. Although most participants are not explicitly aware of the textual source of these values, they have been deeply embedded in social behavior and religious traditions. The prayer gatherings serve not only as a medium for spiritual enrichment but also as a space for character formation, strengthening social bonds, and enhancing communal faith. This study underscores the role of local religious traditions as effective vehicles for transmitting Quranic values in socially meaningful and practical ways within Muslim communities.

INTRODUCTION

In recent developments, Quranic studies are no longer limited to textual, linguistic, and normative exegesis, but have also shifted toward examining how the Quran is understood, accepted, and brought to life in the social practices of communities. This development broadens the horizon of Quranic studies from the realm of exegesis to the social realm, so that the verses of the Quran are not only read as a source of meaning but also as a source of values that shape the actions, customs, and patterns of interaction among Muslims. In this context, the Living Quran approach becomes significant because it positions the Quran as a sacred text that is alive within the social experience of the community, whether through rituals, traditions, or daily practices that are collectively inherited and maintained (Amin & Nurhayat, 2020; Rafiq, 2021). Through this approach, the relationship between the Quran and society is not understood as a one-way relationship between text and reader, but rather as a reciprocal relationship that continues to unfold within cultural spaces and social life.

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In the Indonesian context, the presence of the Quran in the lives of Muslim communities takes many different forms. The Quran is not merely present as a text for worship but also forms part of religious cultural practices such as religious study sessions, *yasinan*, *khataman*, *wirid*, *zikir*, and various other local traditions. This diversity indicates that society's reception of the Quran occurs through aesthetic, cultural, and academic dimensions. The Quran is not merely read and interpreted but is also utilized, interpreted, and embodied in social practices that continue to be passed down from generation to generation. Consequently, the study of the Quran in Indonesia demands attention not only to the text but also to the social realities that reveal how the verses of the Quran are internalized in the behavior and traditions of the community.

One important aspect of religious social life that receives attention in the Qur'an is the etiquette of gatherings. The etiquette of gatherings is significant because a gathering is not merely a space for gathering, but also a space for learning, communication, and the cultivation of social manners. In Islam, the quality of a gathering is determined not only by the topics discussed but also by the attitudes of the participants, such as the willingness to make room for others, maintain order, respect one another, and honor knowledge. These values are clearly evident in Surah Al-Mujadalah [58]:11, which serves as the primary foundation for this study (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجْلِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ انشُرُوا فَانْشُرُوا
يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

Meaning: O you who have believed, when you are told, "Space yourselves" in assemblies, then make space; Allah will make space for you. And when you are told, "Arise," then arise; Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah is Acquainted with what you do (QS. Al-Mujadalah [58]:11).

This verse demonstrates that the ethics of gatherings in Islam cannot be separated from the values of respect for others and appreciation for knowledge. The command to make room does not merely mean providing physical space, but also fostering a social atmosphere that is open, orderly, and inclusive. In both classical and contemporary interpretations, this verse is understood as a crucial foundation for establishing a civilized assembly, where the presence of others is respected and scholarly activities are honored (Al-Thabari, 2001; M. Quraish Shihab, 2016). Thus, QS. Al-Mujadalah [58]:11 does not merely regulate seating arrangements but also establishes the foundation of social ethics within religious forums.

This ethic becomes more complete when read alongside QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:11, which emphasizes the prohibition against belittling, criticizing, and addressing others with derogatory terms. While QS. Al-Mujadalah [58]:11 emphasizes order in the assembly and respect for knowledge, QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:11 reinforces the dimension of respect for the dignity of others and the need for restraint in speech during social interactions.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِغْسِ الْأَسْمَاءِ الْقُسُوفِ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

Meaning: O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after [one's] faith.

And whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers (QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:11)

These two verses demonstrate that, from the Quran's perspective, the ethics of an assembly encompass a comprehensive dimension, namely outward order and social courtesy. An assembly is not sufficient if it is merely organized in terms of location and rules; it must also be built upon mutual respect, guarding one's speech, and upholding the dignity of others. The relevance of this verse becomes even stronger when applied to women's religious forums, including the tradition of perwitran, which heavily relies on the quality of interactions among members to foster a sense of togetherness and exemplary conduct.

One tangible manifestation of the Quran's presence in the social life of the community is the tradition of women's prayer gatherings. Women's Prayer Gatherings is a regular religious activity that typically involves the recitation of Surah Yasin, communal prayer, *zhikr*, and the delivery of religious sermons. In Muslim communities, women's prayer gatherings serves not only as a means of worship but also as a space for social interaction, religious education, and the reinforcement of Islamic values within the community. Therefore, women's prayer gatherings can be understood as part of the "living Quran" practice that is, when the Quran is not merely a text to be read but comes alive within traditions collectively practiced by the community. Research on the Yasinan tradition indicates that the recitation of Surah Yasin in Indonesia has evolved into a religious practice that embodies dimensions of togetherness, solidarity, and the cultivation of Islamic values within communal life (Sagir & Hasan, 2021). Thus, women's prayer gatherings is not merely a ritual forum but also an arena for the actualization of Quranic values in social life.

This phenomenon is clearly evident in the tradition of women's prayer gatherings in a certain region of Indonesia. Based on field data, this practice has been ongoing for quite some time and has become an integral part of the local community's socio-religious life. At the research site, these gatherings consist of recitations of the Yasin, communal prayers, and brief sermons, and are attended by participants of varying ages and backgrounds. Its existence demonstrates that women's religious forums serve not only as gathering places for worship but also as spaces for shaping social attitudes, maintaining social bonds, and transmitting religious values in daily life. In such forums, the values of the Quran are not merely present in the recitations but are enacted through repeated interactions, customs, and exemplary behavior. Field data indicates that participants view politeness, order, and respect for others as essential elements of the gathering, even when not all participants are familiar with the specific Quranic verses that serve as their normative foundation. This situation demonstrates that Quranic values can thrive in collective societal actions through a continuous process of social internalization.

Theoretically, this phenomenon is relevant to the Living Quran approach, which emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between the sacred text and its reading community. The Quran is understood not merely as a text with a fixed meaning, but as a living scripture embedded in the actions, customs, and social experiences of Muslims. Through this approach, research attention is directed not only toward what the text says, but also toward how it is received, interpreted, and practiced within the context of real life (Rafiq, 2021). In this sense, the tradition of recitation becomes a crucial space for tracing how Quranic verses move from the normative level to the level of social practice. This study positions the Quran not only as a source of doctrine but also as a source of religious cultural formation at the community level.

Although studies on the Living Quran have expanded considerably, most previous research has still focused on the reception of recitation, ritual functions, or changes in religious traditions. Research on the recitation of Surah Yasin, for example, has shown that this tradition serves strong social and spiritual functions within society (Sagir & Hasan, 2021). Other research indicates that the recitation of Quranic verses can undergo an expansion of meaning in accordance with the social needs of the community, as seen in the changing use of Surah Yasin across various communal traditions (Persada et al., 2021). On the other hand, studies on *majelis taklim* indicate that women's religious forums have evolved into spaces for religious education, strengthening solidarity, and empowering women in social life (Agustina et al., 2024; Fadillah, 2023; Ridho et al., 2023). However, research specifically linking a particular verse of the Quran to the implementation of social ethics in the behavior of women's communities at the local level remains relatively limited.

This limitation points to a significant gap in the literature that needs to be addressed. Until now, Living Quran studies have largely focused on how verses are read, used, or presented in rituals, while the social-ethical dimension of the Quran as a lived practice within the community has not received adequate attention. Yet, this aspect is crucial as it reveals how the Quran operates at the level of social relations, character formation, and communal life. In this context, QS. Al-Mujadalah [58]:11 offers a very clear focus as it speaks directly about ethics in gatherings, while QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:11 reinforces the dimension of social courtesy that underpins the quality of interaction in religious forums. By connecting these two verses to the tradition of women's recitation circles, this study seeks to expand the scope of Living Quran studies from merely ritual reception toward an analysis of the internalization of Quranic ethics in local social practices.

The significance of this research also lies in its contribution to understanding women's religious forums in the present and future contexts. Amid social change, forums such as women's prayer gatherings remain relevant as spaces for religious learning that are close to the community, affordable, regular, and grounded in strong social bonds. At the same time, these forums also have the potential to serve as spaces for the subtle reproduction of Quranic values namely through the practices of mutual respect, maintaining order, making room for others, and guarding one's speech. Thus, this study not only contributes to strengthening the theory of the Living Quran but also offers insights into research on women's religious forums, Islamic social ethics, and the dynamics of local traditions within contemporary Muslim societies. Looking ahead, research of this kind is important to demonstrate that local religious traditions are not always synonymous with ritual repetition but can also serve as an effective medium for character formation and the strengthening of social cohesion.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the ethics of the assembly as described in QS. Al-Mujadalah [58]:11 within the women's prayer gatherings tradition from the perspective of the Living Quran. This study focuses on three main issues: how the ethical values of the assembly are understood by the participants, how these values are manifested in social behavior during the activities, and how women's prayer gatherings functions as a medium for transmitting Quranic values at the community level. Theoretically, this study is expected to strengthen research on the Living Quran, particularly regarding the social ethics of the Quran as they are lived out in local community practices. Practically, this study aims to demonstrate that women's religious forums can serve as spaces for character development,

strengthening social bonds, and the cultivation of Quranic values in daily life. Thus, this study is expected to make a scholarly contribution that is not only relevant to the interpretation of current local religious traditions but also useful for the development of Quranic studies and the social life of Muslims in the future.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach from the perspective of the Living Quran (Aryasutha et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2025; 2026; Mustafa et al., 2026). This approach was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how the ethics of assembly in Quranic Surah Al-Mujadalah [58]:11 is applied in the recitation traditions of women in Dusun III Karang Baru, Datuk Tanah Datar Subdistrict, Batu Bara Regency, North Sumatra. In Living Quran studies, the Quran is understood not merely as a text to be read, but also as a living value embedded in the social and cultural practices of the community (Aris, 2022; Mansur & Syamsuddin, 2019). Therefore, this approach is considered appropriate for examining the relationship between the teachings of the Quran and religious behavior in the daily lives of Muslim communities. The research was conducted in April 2026 by selecting three informants through purposive sampling. The selection of informants was based on their active involvement in recitation activities as well as the relevance of their experiences to the research focus.

Data collection was conducted through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation was used to directly observe the course of the women's prayer gatherings activities, the atmosphere of the gathering, and the behavior of the participants during the activities. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the informants' understanding of the etiquette of the gathering, their attitudes toward fellow participants, and their experiences during the women's prayer gatherings. Documentation was used to supplement field data in the form of notes and photographs of the research activities. The data obtained were then analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions so that the findings could be organized systematically and be easily understood (Huberman, 2014). To ensure the validity of the data, this study employed source triangulation by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation (Akem et al., 2025; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Thuwaiba & Salaeh, 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Women's Prayer Gatherings as a Social and Religious Space

Women's prayer gatherings is a regular religious activity that has been taking place for quite some time and has become an integral part of the local community's social and religious life. Based on observations and interviews, this activity is attended by women of varying ages and backgrounds, ranging from senior members to relatively new members. This variation in the length of participation indicates that women's prayer gatherings is not a one-off event, but rather a tradition that is continuously upheld within the local community. From a social perspective, this continuity reveals a process of tradition transmission among members and across generations, allowing women's prayer gatherings to be understood as a forum that ensures the continuity of women's religious practices at the community level. Thus, women's prayer gatherings serve not only as a venue for communal worship but also as a social space that connects intergenerational religious experiences within a communal bond.

In general, the structure of women's prayer gatherings activities follows a relatively fixed format, consisting of the recitation of Surah Yasin, communal prayer, and a brief religious talk. This structure indicates that women's prayer gatherings have a simple ritual framework, yet it still encompasses dimensions of worship, religious education, and social solidarity. The recitation of Surah Yasin places the Quran at the center of the activity, while the communal prayer and religious discourse expand the meaning of the gathering from a mere ritual recitation to spiritual cultivation and the strengthening of religious understanding. From the perspective of the Living Quran, this indicates that the Quran is not merely present as a text to be read but also as a set of values embodied in the collective practices of the community (Rafiq, 2021). This finding aligns with studies on the *yasinan* tradition in Indonesia, which affirm that the recitation of Surah Yasin has evolved into a religious practice encompassing dimensions of worship, solidarity, and the cultivation of Islamic values within communal life (Sagir & Hasan, 2021). Therefore, the recitation at the research site can be understood as a form of cultural reception of the Quran, specifically when Quranic verses are present in social practices routinely carried out by the Muslim community.

Women's prayer gatherings functions as a collective religious forum that brings participants together in a space for worship and social interaction. The significance of this activity lies in its role as a space for fostering religious values and strengthening social relationships among Muslim women at the local level. In this regard, women's prayer gatherings serve as a medium that unites worship, fellowship, and the learning of Islamic values within a vibrant communal practice.

The existence of women's prayer gatherings as a socio-religious space is also evident from the benefits experienced by the participants. This activity is understood not only to increase religious knowledge but also to strengthen social bonds, enhance faith, and bring inner peace. These findings indicate that women's prayer gatherings serve a dual function: as a forum for worship and as a space for the formation of social bonds (Ma'mum et al., 2025). These results align with research that positions women's religious forums as spaces for communication, solidarity, and the cultivation of Islamic values within society (Agustina et al., 2024; Fadillah, 2023; Ridho et al., 2023). Thus, the women's prayer gatherings in Dusun III Karang Baru can be understood as an active, stable, and functional socio-religious space in preserving the religious traditions of the Muslim community and serves as a crucial foundation for analyzing the implementation of *majelis* ethics in subsequent discussions.

The Implementation of the Ethics of the Assembly in QS. Al-Mujadalah [58]:11 in the Practice of Women's Prayer Gatherings

The main finding of this study indicates that the ethics of the assembly in QS. Al-Mujadalah [58]:11 have been tangibly implemented in the tradition of women's gatherings among women in Indonesia. This implementation is evident in the custom of making room for arriving participants, as conveyed by informants through direct interviews in the following interview excerpt.

.. when a new participant arrives, I invite them to sit down and make room for them; even when the space feels cramped, the participants who are already present will shift so that everyone can still sit comfortably (informant 1); ... participants who arrive are usually immediately invited to sit down, and if the space feels full, seats will be shifted slightly (informant 2)

These findings demonstrate that the value of *tafassahu* or making room in the gathering has become a shared custom in women's prayer gatherings. This practice indicates that the verse is not merely a normative text but also a social

ethic that shapes concrete behavior in communal life (Octaviana et al., 2023; Riyaldi et al., 2025).

The significance of offering a seat in religious gatherings can be interpreted not only as a physical act of providing a place to sit, but also as a form of social acceptance of another person's presence. When participants are invited to sit and are given space, what occurs is not merely the arrangement of seating in the gathering, but also an affirmation that every member of the assembly is accepted as part of the community. In this context, the practice of *tafassahu* carries both social and psychological dimensions, as it fosters an atmosphere of respect, comfort, and openness within religious activities. This finding demonstrates that the values of the Quran can be embodied in seemingly simple actions that carry profound ethical significance. Thus, the ethics of the assembly in QS. Al-Mujadalah [58]:11 finds its concrete form in the social custom of women's prayer gatherings practiced repeatedly, so that the spaciousness within the assembly is not merely spatial but also reflects a spaciousness of attitude in social relations (Zuhdi, 2022).

These findings can be further substantiated through a study that views *yasinan* as a performative and social Quranic practice. The tradition of reciting Surah Yasin is not only understood as a ritual activity but also as a collective practice that generates meaning through shared participation, congregational solidarity, and the formation of moral bonds within the community. In this context, the recitation of the Quran does not merely involve the repetition of text but becomes a communal social experience. On the other hand, *majelis taklim* and similar religious forums also play a strategic role in the socio-cultural transformation of society, as they serve not only as places for religious learning but also as spaces for the formation of social order, communication, and the reinforcement of shared values (Hasyim, 2021). Thus, the implementation of *majelis* ethics in women's prayer gatherings does not stand alone as a textual norm but grows through repeated communal practices, collective recitation of Surah Yasin, and an atmosphere of togetherness that allows the values of respect, openness, and order to be socially internalized by the participants.

The implementation of assembly etiquette was also evident in the participants' behavior throughout the activity. All three informants demonstrated a relatively consistent understanding of proper conduct in the assembly, as conveyed by the informants in the following interviews.

Participants must be polite, not make noise, listen attentively, and respect others (informant 1); during the event, participants must remain silent, must not speak while the recitation is taking place, and must respect others (informant 2); proper conduct in the assembly involves sitting neatly and not making noise (informant 3)

The similarity of these responses indicates that norms of order, politeness, and respect for others have been well internalized within the prayer group community. In this context, the ethics of the gathering do not exist as written rules, but rather as collective customs that are collectively understood and practiced. This finding demonstrates that local-level women's religious forums possess the capacity to transmit social etiquette through repeated practices and a stable atmosphere of togetherness.

Interestingly, this study also found a discrepancy between textual knowledge of Quranic verses and the implementation of their values in practice, as expressed by an informant

I am aware of a Quranic verse that speaks of making room in the assembly and elevating the status of the learned (informant 1); I am not very familiar with the verse, although I understand that one must behave politely in the assembly (informant 2); I am not aware of that verse (informant 3)

Nevertheless, all three informants continued to exhibit behavioral patterns consistent with the content of the verse. This finding demonstrates that the transmission of Quranic values within the women's prayer gatherings community does not always occur through formal textual knowledge, but also through customs, exemplary conduct, and repeated social experiences (Persada et al., 2021). From the Living Quran perspective, this indicates that the Quran is alive within society not only in the form of recitation and memorization but also in the form of social behavior rooted in religious traditions (Rafiq, 2021). Thus, the implementation of majlis ethics in women's prayer gatherings demonstrates that Quranic values can be effectively internalized through stable, simple communal practices that are closely tied to the daily lives of Muslim communities.

Women's Prayer Gatherings as a Medium for Transmitting Quranic Values and Character Building

The results of this study indicate that women's prayer gatherings is not only a forum for religious rituals but also serves as a medium for transmitting Quranic values and fostering character development among participants. This is evident from the informants' statements regarding the benefits of participating in women's prayer gatherings.

This activity increases religious knowledge, strengthens social bonds, and enhances faith (informant 1); women's prayer gatherings provide benefits in the form of increased knowledge and the maintenance of social bonds (informant 2); women's prayer gatherings bring her closer to other women and earns her rewards (informant 3)

These responses show that the impact of women's prayer gatherings extends beyond the performance of religious rituals to the formation of attitudes, the strengthening of social relationships, and the growth of participants' moral awareness. Upon closer examination, the process of character building in women's prayer gatherings occurs through simple yet effective mechanisms. Values such as politeness, orderliness, respect for others, and a willingness to make room for others are not taught theoretically during each session, but are demonstrated through actions that participants can observe, imitate, and replicate. Newer members learn from older members through direct observation of how they conduct themselves in the assembly. Thus, women's prayer gatherings functions as a space for social-religious learning based on exemplary behavior (Wahid, 2020).

This finding aligns with the view that women's religious forums play a crucial role in shaping social morality and strengthening community cohesion. Studies on *majelis taklim* indicate that such forums are no longer merely venues for listening to religious lectures, but have also become spaces for communication, strengthening sisterhood, and fostering social awareness among women. Therefore, women's prayer gatherings can be understood as an effective informal social institution for transmitting Quranic values at the grassroots level.

Within the framework of the Living Quran, these findings indicate that the value of QS. Al-Mujadalah [58]:11 does not remain confined to the textual level but is present in the social practices repeatedly carried out within the women's prayer gatherings tradition. The customs of making room for others, maintaining order, respecting peers, and listening to the sharing of knowledge demonstrate that the ethics of the gathering have become an integral part of the social interaction patterns among participants. This indicates that local women's religious forums function not only as spaces for worship but also as spaces for the internalization of Quranic values in daily life. Thus, women's prayer gatherings can be understood as a socio-religious medium that enables the

teachings of the Quran to be collectively internalized and practiced within the context of the Muslim community.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the ethics of assembly as described in QS. Al-Mujadalah [58]:11 have been implemented in the tradition of women's prayer gatherings through the customs of making room for arriving participants, maintaining order during the event, behaving politely, respecting others, and listening attentively to the presentation of knowledge. This finding demonstrates that the values of the Quran are not always brought to life through explicit mastery of the text, but also through social customs that are passed down and repeatedly practiced within the community. Thus, women's prayer gatherings functions not only as a forum for worship that includes the recitation of Surah Yasin, communal prayer, and religious counsel, but also as a space for socio-religious learning that strengthens social bonds, enhances religious knowledge, deepens faith, and fosters mutual respect among participants. From the Living Quran perspective, this tradition demonstrates that the teachings of the Quran are tangibly present in the social actions of Muslim communities. Therefore, women's prayer gatherings can be understood as an effective medium for the transmission of Quranic values and character formation at the community level. This study also underscores the importance of women's religious forums as spaces for cultivating Islamic ethics in daily life.

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