

Developing Reading Access: Study of The Liberal Feminist Movement of Aisyiyah in East Java

Tri Soesantari, Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia
Fitri Mutia, Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia
Yunus Abdul Halim, Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia
Adam Syarief Thamrin, Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia

Abstract

The awakening of women has been felt through movements and forms of struggle for hundreds of years, and this awakening has given birth to many influential women in the world. In Indonesia, many women's movements face various dynamic and persistent struggles to acquire an education. One association addressing these struggles is Aisyiyah, headquartered in East Java. Aisyiyah is a grassroots organization that aims to lessen the inequality experienced by women, especially in the areas of education and literacy. This study used a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach to focus on how Aisyiyah women navigate their educational journeys to build and provide access to reading for women in East Java so that Aisyiyah women are fortified to participate in modern life. The location of this research was in East Java, Indonesia, namely the areas of Sidoarjo Regency, Malang City, and Banyuwangi Regency, with a total of 30 respondents consisting of Aisyiyah leaders and members. The results represent the collaborative efforts of Aisyiyah and the larger Indonesian community in increasing public awareness of the importance of women's education and literacy.

Keywords: East Java; feminism; information access; reading practices; women's movement

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Introduction

Women's awakening emerged after centuries of struggle and the formation of various women's movements. Women's movements do not stop at mere discourse and theory; concrete forms of their struggles are dynamic and consistent. There are many influential women worldwide, such as Megawati Soekarnoputri (former president of the Republic of Indonesia), Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (former president of the Philippines) and Queen Elizabeth II (former queen of the United Kingdom and longest reigning monarch in British history). The emergence of female leaders on a global scale verifies that the conservative and traditional tendency to place women as the second person is declining. In 21st-century Indonesia, women can maintain their careers and even play essential roles in the public sector. In general, women have careers in the public sector due to social, psychological, and economic demands (Azizah, 2021; Djamaluddin, 2018; Sari, 2022; Tuwu, 2018).

In Indonesia, many women's movements have dealt with various ongoing struggles. Women in Java (Indonesia) in the early 20th century were forbidden from receiving education in public places and had to devote their lives to caring for their families and homes. The seclusion of women was a typical practice among Javanese families when Aisyiyah was founded in 1917.

Ahmad Dahlan (1868-1923), a well-known Indonesian Islamic reformer, is credited with encouraging Muslim women's participation in public life and education (Mu'thi et al., 2015). In response to Dahlan's message, Aisyiyah worked to improve the status of women in Indonesia by championing women's education and access to public space. Aisyiyah's early efforts provided opportunities for women to receive education, especially religious education (Aryanti, 2013; Rinaldo, 2011).

Aisyiyah is the largest religious women's organization in Indonesia, with its work spanning more than a century. Aisyiyah is a unit within the Muhammadiyah Association engaged in Islam and preaching *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*¹, with Islamic ideology from the Al Qur'an and As-Sunnah (Ozdemir, 2018). The Aisyiyah organization focuses on women's empowerment. Aisyiyah's achievements in fighting for women's rights have been recorded since its founding in 1917 (Aryanti, 2013; Rinaldo, 2011). Aisyiyah currently has 34 Regional Leaders (provincial), 370 Regional Leaders (district/city), 2,332 Branch Leaders (district) and 6,924 Branch Leaders (village) (Aisyiyah East Java, 2017).

Within two years of its founding, Aisyiyah pioneered establishing the first education initiative for children in Indonesia with the Frobel School, currently called Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfalor, also called kindergarten ABA. During their early years, Aisyiyah also promoted literacy with students learning Latin and Arabic, provided religious education for batik workers, and established the first women's prayer room in 1922, later replicated across Indonesia and becoming a hallmark of Aisyiyah. These activities initiated by Aisyiyah were efforts to increase knowledge and encourage women's participation in the public sphere. To spread their ideas, Aisyiyah first published an organizational magazine called *Suara Aisyiyah* in 1926, which is still being published today (Aisyiyah East Java, 2017).

The Aisyiyah movement continues to grow and work toward increasing and advancing the dignity of Indonesian women. A natural result is a form of charity work in the field of education where Aisyiyah is currently managing and coaching as many as 86 early learning preschools, 5,865 kindergartens, 380 Madrasah Diniyah², 668 Al Quran Educational Parks, 2,920 Aisyiyah Teachers' Associations in Bustanul Athfal, 399 Ikatan Guru Aisyiyah Teachers' Associations (IGA), ten special schools, 14 elementary schools, five junior high schools, ten Islamic junior high schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah³), eight high schools, two vocational schools, Islamic senior high schools (Madrasah Aliyah⁴), five female boarding schools, and 28 knowledge and employability education centers. Currently, Aisyiyah is also trusted by the Indonesian government to organize hundreds of early childhood education centers throughout the country. As for higher education, Aisyiyah has three tertiary institutions: two Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan (institutes of health sciences) (STIKes), three Akademi Kebidanan (midwifery academies) (AKBIDs), and two Akademi Keperawatan (nursing academies) (AKPERs) throughout Indonesia (Aisyiyah East Java, 2017).

In their study entitled *The World's Most Literate Nations*, Miller and McKenna (2016) report that out of 61 reading-interest countries, Indonesia is in 60th place, indicating that the level of interest in reading in Indonesia is low. In Miller and McKenna's (2016) study, Indonesia is ranked below Thailand and slightly above Botswana. According to a study by UNESCO, only one out of every 10,000 Indonesians is interested in reading, equal to 0.1 percent (Sartono et al., 2022; Psaki et al., 2022). The Badan Pusat Statistik's (BPS: Statistics Indonesia) data for 1999 showed that among Indonesians in the age group 20-44 years, male illiteracy was four per 100 people, while women's illiteracy for the same age group was nine per 100 people, indicating that the education gap between men and women that have been around for hundreds of years, still exists (Central

Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Although many bookstores are scattered in various corners of cities, in shopping centers and public facilities, the government has also embedded reading facilities within residential communities, such as Community Reading Parks (Nura'ini, 2013; Yanti et al., 2020; Sartono et al., 2022).

On the Central Bureau of Statistics website, the education gap in the East Java region of Banyuwangi is recorded as only 26% of women have completed elementary school, and around 35% of women have completed their education through primary school. These statistics show that over 50% of Banyuwangi women have completed elementary school. In 2020, the average number of citizens who completed primary schooling in Banyuwangi Regency was 7.16 percent. This figure is still below the average length of primary schooling in East Java Province at 7.30 percent. The number of Banyuwangi residents needing to upgrade their educational status to the high school level is approximately 660,000 (Central Bureau of Statistics - Banyuwangi, 2020). The same thing happened in the Sidoarjo area; based on data obtained from the Sidoarjo government, the highest level of education for most women in Sidoarjo was a high school education (Central Bureau of Sidoarjo, 2018).

In contrast to women's education in Banyuwangi Regency, the Central Bureau of Statistics (2020) recorded that in neighboring Malang Regency, women's participation in education is nearly equal to that of men. The results indicate that women's APS is higher than men's at the elementary and junior high school levels. Meanwhile, education at the senior high school level indicates that the male enrollment rate is higher than that of the female school enrollment rate.

Based on the data above, these problems can be addressed by coordinating and increasing access to reading resources for women. The main concerns for Aisyiyah are education, literacy, reading interest, and other related issues, which aim for women to gain a broad understanding and knowledge of life skills without giving up their household responsibilities as wives and mothers for their families and children. In this vein, Aisyiyah's work is aligned with the basic principles of feminism, including the abolition of slavery and the attainment of women's rights in Indonesia, especially the right to participate in and obtain an education that is equal to men (Alonso-Sanz & Ramon, 2022; Soesantari & Isvandiari, 2017; Stieber, 2022).

This study focuses on how women in Aisyiyah develop and provide access to reading for women in select locations in East Java Province. This research was conducted from a perspective of empowerment to document how Indonesian women receive the necessary education to enhance their knowledge and literacy practices so they can have agency as women who are actively engaged in modern life. To achieve these goals, Aisyiyah employs various methods, such as publishing a monthly magazine to foster a culture of literacy among Aisyiyah members at every level, conducting regular meetings that build relationships and encourage insight, knowledge, and interest in literacy practices such as reading, that support women's issues. The study aimed to offer voicedness for Aisyiyah women in East Java by documenting their reading interests and how those interests help women carry out their daily activities in Sidoarjo, Malang, and Banyuwangi. These areas were chosen because Aisyiyah in these three regions actively implemented literacy programs for cadres (local volunteer groups), Aisyiyah members, and the general public.

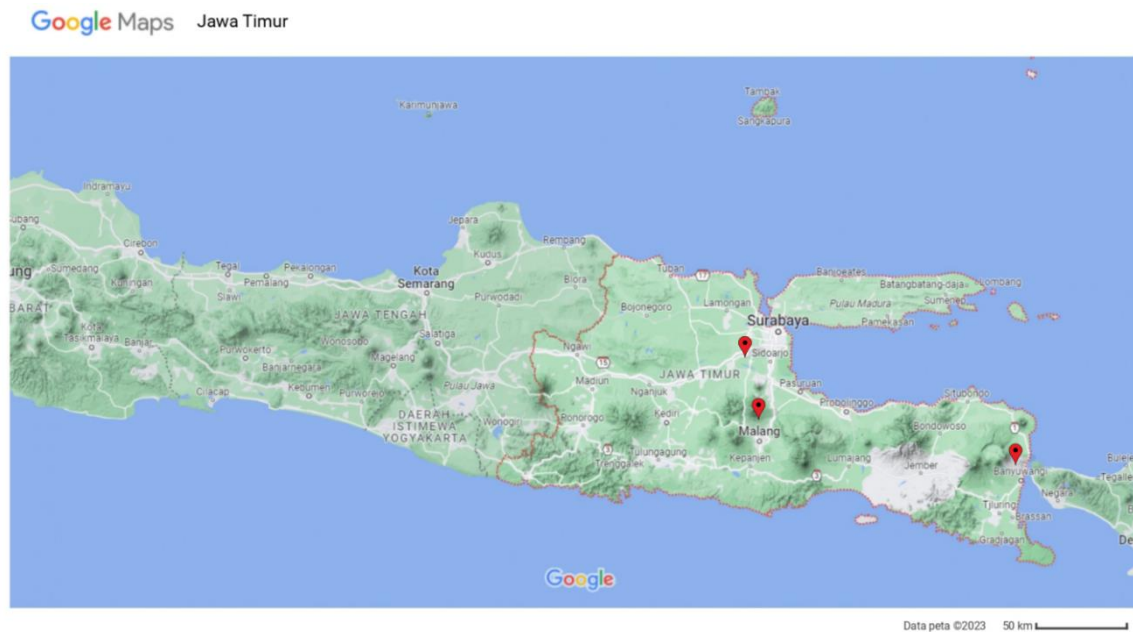


Figure 1. Sidoarjo, Malang, and Banyuwangi

Theoretical Framework

Liberal Feminism

Mary Wollstonecraft first described liberal feminism in her book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, published in 1792. Wollstonecraft promotes women's participation in decision-making and self-governing policymaking. Liberal feminism demands equal rights and opportunities for men and women (Lubis, 2006). Such rights are attainable through education (Soesantari & Isvandiari, 2017). Wollstonecraft's wisdom from centuries ago guides us to understand that highly educated women do not need to be economically independent to be civically active, nor must they be politically active to be economically independent. The liberal feminism movement, apart from promoting equality of civic opportunity or economic opportunities between men and women, also emphasizes the start of equality between men and women in education (Tong, 2009). Education is a determining factor for women so that they can educate themselves to have the same skills, abilities, and competencies as men and to be empowered to participate in community life so that the agency of women is not underestimated (Fitriani & Neviyarni, 2022; Novianti et al., 2022; Rahmah, 2022).

This study's liberal feminist framework discusses how women meet their information needs and how efforts to empower women, especially women who are members of Aisyiyah in East Java, build access to reading so that they develop insights and knowledge to improve their economy and welfare. The movements and struggles of the women in this study aim to get equality in obtaining education, gaining access to reading, and increasing their culture of interest in reading. They deserve equal treatment to men.

Information Society

Yoneji Masuda, a pioneer of computerization in Japan, predicted the emergence of an information society in his seminal book, *The Information Society as Post-Industrial Society* (1981). Masuda also maintains that in an information society, there is a transition where the output of information values controls the development of society (Masuda, 1990). The information science and social science fields have taken up his position that the transformation of society brings human intellectual creativity into rapid growth rather than using abundant material (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Mansell, 2009; Webster, 2014).

Daniel Bell (1973; 1999) used the term *post-industrial society*, a shift in the production of goods to a system of knowledge, insight, and innovation in services or services as a strategy and source of transformation in society. Analytically, Bell delineates society into three realms where technology and economics are intertwined: pre-industrial, industrial, and post-industrial. A pre-industrial society focuses on machines as central to the economy, whereas an industrial society focuses on an intellectual economy. Bell posits that a post-industrial society combines pre-industrial and industrial to center information as a technology, thus making information a commodity (1999, p. xxx). Post-industrial society combines the technologist and the economist (Vidickiene, 2017). Society in the post-industrial era is supported by information technology. According to Castells (2010), what is referred to as the information society is a network society that emphasizes the role of information as a commodity. Castells argues that there is a new space based on the characteristics of mainstream cultural activity. It is a type of community network, namely flow space, where information exchange activities are carried out through streams (Castells, 2010). Martin (1995) also pointed out that the information society is a situation in which quality of life, the spread of social change, and economic development depend on the flow of information and its usefulness (Ryo, 2020; Silva et al., 2017; Wu & Hu, 2018). In the case of the Aisiyiah organization in East Java, especially in Banyuwangi, Malang, and Sidoarjo, one consideration is understanding how information becomes a flowing commodity to develop the quality of life of Aisiyiah women. Aisiyiah creates an information stream via various programs that empower women through access to reading. Each of the initiated programs aims to improve education, literacy, and religion in the economy of Aisiyiah women.

Method

This research uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The descriptive approach describes Aisiyiah women's movement in East Java. This research was conducted in three East Java regions: Sidoarjo Regency, Malang City, and Banyuwangi Regency. These areas were chosen because Aisiyiah in these three regions actively implemented literacy programs for cadres (local volunteer groups), Aisiyiah members, and the public. This study included a total of 30 participants, with ten respondents coming from each of the three regions, including the head of the Aisiyiah East Java, the head of the Aisiyiah Education Board East Java, the head of Arts and Culture Aisiyiah East Java, the Head of the Charity Agency Aisiyiah East Java, the cadres of Aisiyiah East Java, the editorial team of the monthly magazine *Aisiyiah Jawa Timur "Walida,"* and the Teachers' Association of Aisiyiah East Java.

This study collected data through interviews, which were carried out systematically with guidelines that had been made and based on the research objectives: to learn how Aisiyiah women develop literacy practices to provide access to reading for women's empowerment. Data collection was also carried out through observations to support the research results. Observations

were done to gather information on how Aisiyiah women in East Java navigated their environment to build resources and organize their access. Observations were made by visiting several Aisiyiah reading centers in each region studied: Sidoarjo, Malang, and Banyuwangi. Data analysis involved reducing data into a summary by selecting primary data, focusing on critical elements, and categorizing the data. Data display was then performed by presenting data as brief narrative descriptions. This was done to make it easier for researchers to analyze and understand the results. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified. Meaning-making at this stage was influenced by the extent of the researchers' understanding and interpretation. The interviews and observations conducted in the three regions, Aisiyiah Sidoarjo, Malang, and Banyuwangi, were analyzed systematically, carefully, and accurately (Sugiyono, 2020).

Results and Discussion

Overview of Women's Education in East Java

Awareness of the importance of education has made women improve their social skills in East Java. The development of women's education in Indonesia, especially in East Java, has increased yearly. The development of women's education can be seen from the percentage of East Java's Gender Development Index (IPG), which shows an increase in the level of IPG from year to year. In 2015, IPG reached 91.67 percent (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021). This percentage shows how the education level of women in East Java has increased, as has their awareness of its importance. Education that supports women will provide women with opportunities to help the surrounding community and assist in solving societal problems. Additionally, higher education influences women's knowledge about personal problems and social issues so that they can contribute to solving problems with their knowledge (Novianti et al., 2022; Yanti et al., 2020). East Java Statistical Data showed that the Gender Empowerment Index in 2021 reached 72.36 percent (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Based on the data, more than half of the women from the female population in East Java have succeeded in establishing themselves as professionals and involving themselves in society.

Education at Aisiyiah is considered exceptionally qualified. Aisiyiah is an institution engaged in *da'wah*⁵ and community development. Aisiyiah women have their role in developing *da'wah* in society and community life. The actions of these women cannot be separated from their level of education. Based on the results of the interviews conducted in this study, it is known that the education level of Aisiyiah women in Sidoarjo, Malang, and Banyuwangi is high, which shows that almost all women who have important positions and roles in Aisiyiah have a bachelor's-level degree, both Strata 1 to Strata 2.⁶ Through this data, women who take essential roles in the organization are also aware of the importance of education so that women are not looked down upon compared to men. The idea of equality in perception between the sexes follows Wollstonecraft's concept, which encourages women to participate in autonomous decision-making and policy-making. This improved perception can be achieved through education (Soesantari & Isvandiari, 2017). The concern of women in Banyuwangi, Malang, and Sidoarjo has made Aisiyiah women move and participate in elevating women's education which tends to be lacking in East Java society. The education level of these women is related to the availability and access to reading. Research has shown that one factor that influences a person's knowledge is their education (Christian-Smith & Kellor, 2021; Kim, 2021).

Aisiyiah has implemented many programs to improve women's education in East Java, which still needs improvement. These educational programs aim to improve the quality of Aisiyiah's

educational practices as a strategy for forming whole, knowledgeable, integral human beings. Programs in the East Java education sector have three sub-sectors/divisions: 1) Early childhood education and family education, which covers kindergarten, family planning, The Al Quran Education Park, similar early childhood education units, and parenting; 2) General and religious education of all types and at all levels, including elementary school/Islamic elementary school, junior high school/Islamic junior high school, senior high school/Islamic senior high school/vocational high school, special needs school, inclusive schools, Islamic boarding schools, boarding schools, The Al Quran Education Park, and Islamic school; and 3) Community Education, which includes *Pendidikan Luar Sekolah* [out of school education] (PLS), *Pendidikan Non Formal* [non-formal education] (PNF), *Pusat Krisis Berbasis Masyarakat* [community-based crisis centers] (PKBM), *Taman Bacaan Masyarakat* [community reading centers] (TBM), courses, equality, literacy, women's and gender empowerment education, and life skills. Improvements can be seen according to the results of the interview with Participant M, who stated the following:

For the welfare of HR [human resources] cadre members whose education is still high school, they can get a bachelor's degree; usually, they have a bachelor's degree at the Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo, if not at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang. In addition to improving education both in terms of quantity and quality. (Participant M, personal communication, August 16, 2018)

Informant M explained that Aisyiyah has succeeded in bringing prosperity to HR cadres whose education is still classified as a high school level through the opportunity to continue their education to the bachelor level. M's testimony evidences that Aisyiyah successfully empowers women, especially in education. Aisyiyah not only provides education to women, but they also conduct various pieces of training that improve women's reading abilities, which can be used to increase their knowledge. As conveyed by Participant A,

The education program follows seminars and training organized by the branch. Usually, branches hold seminars and training; all teachers and principals must attend to add insight and knowledge. Usually, there are the latest programs from the government, such as the Curriculum 2013 branch, to keep us informed. Moreover, it helps in activities and applications to our assignments. (Participant A, personal communication, July 12, 2018)

According to Informant A, the program was beneficial in fulfilling assigned tasks and adding insight and knowledge. Aisyiyah's work emphasizes the importance of women's education. In doing so, women are seen as rational and logical beings with the same skills, abilities, and competencies as men, thus allowing women to have a role in society so that their position, and the position of women in general, is not underestimated. Women have equal rights and opportunities to advance themselves. Aisyiyah's awareness and concern for the importance of women's education and knowledge lead them to take actions that can further increase women's knowledge. Based on this analysis, it can be seen how the education of Aisyiyah women plays a role in their abilities to address others' problems and provide solutions and equal opportunities to women in East Java (Casad et al., 2021; Halliday et al., 2021).

Efforts by Aisyiyah to Build Access to Women's Reading

The Aisyiyah movement⁷ began its focus on eradicating illiteracy for young women in 1923, published a women's magazine, *Suara Aisyiyah*, in 1926, and began educating children by establishing Bustanul Athfal Aisyiyah Kindergarten in 1973 (Chandrawaty, 2021). Aisyiyah's

awareness and concern for preparing women for an impending information society made Aisyiyah a pioneer in providing access to reading for the community. Efforts made by Aisyiyah included establishing various schools from early childhood education, kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, and high school to tertiary institutions in the community. Aisyiyah established libraries at various educational institutions. Libraries and community reading gardens complement schools and provide students with reading access. However, the public needs information to become aware of the availability of community-based reading gardens that can be used to meet the community's information needs (Castells, 2010). According to Participant I,

[t]here is a program...a love of science, such as creating a library corner. The strategy we instruct is to form a library in the management structure and business charity; the business charity here is an Aisyiyah school or educational institution; Aisyiyah educational institutions include kindergarten, Early Childhood Education, Madin, The Al Quran Education Park and so on. (Participant I, personal interview, June 9, 2018)

Aisyiyah began their literacy movement by promoting a love of science via reading, writing, and library activities. One of the clear pieces of evidence that Aisyiyah's scientific literacy movement is still going strong is the continued publication of their *Suara Aisyiyah* magazine since its founding in 1926. *Suara Aisyiyah* exemplifies how literacy is maintained and carried out by Aisyiyah. Another commitment that Aisyiyah has regarding science and literacy includes the introduction of literacy to children from an early age. Aisyiyah carries out this commitment through early childhood education, where the Central Leadership Cultural Institute Aisyiyah strives for literary engagement with fairy tales and children's stories (Aisyiyah East Java, 2017; Central Leadership Aisyiyah, 2022).

The efforts made by Aisyiyah Banyuwangi in building reading access to increase community literacy continued beyond providing libraries on a small to large scale. Mobile libraries are one of Aisyiyah Banyuwangi's innovations, providing an alternative for providing information to women in Banyuwangi so they can more easily meet their information needs. Aisyiyah Malang also established mobile libraries for its community. Mobile libraries are an indication of information accessible to all parts of society. Communal accessibility is one of the characteristics of an information society (Alsufyani & Gill, 2022; Nazarenko et al., 2022). According to Participant A, Aisyiyah Malang established mobile libraries "to increase children's love of reading... one of us, from the teacher, arranged a schedule for visits. Apart from that, we were also invited to the regional library. We also brought in a mobile library" (Participant A, personal communication, July 12, 2018).

Aisyiyah Banyuwangi and Aisyiyah Malang's mobile libraries are vital resources that build access to reading to increase community literacy. Meanwhile, the efforts made by Aisyiyah Sidoarjo are in the form of empowering Aisyiyah women there to play a role in providing access to reading materials. As explained by Participant N from Sidoarjo,

[t]hank God, members of the Aisyiyah women gave books to the library, so there were more and more of them. Then when cadres leave Java, or there is a bazaar event, they will come home bringing souvenirs so they will be placed in the library. (Participant N, personal communication, August 16, 2018)

Efforts made by Aisyiyah Sidoarjo, Malang, and Banyuwangi can answer the problem of the community needing more time or opportunities to come to the library by people being able to

get the information they want and need quickly. For example, in Malang, Aisyiyah's goal for optimal reading access not only focuses on the struggle in the city, which is the location of Aisyiyah's headquarters, but it also targets the surrounding community. It is Aisyiyah's effort to provide reading material to the community widely and try to increase the knowledge of local people who receive less information than those in the city. Following the focus of liberal feminism, studies have emphasized how women have equal rights in education (Fitriani & Neviyarni, 2022; Rahmah, 2022; Rinaldo, 2011). Apart from that, by distributing *Suara 'Aisyiyah*, Aisyiyah tries to provide knowledge to its members and the local community.

The efforts made by Aisyiyah through literacy programs have become evident in helping the government overcome educational inequality in Indonesia, especially in East Java. Illiteracy eradication, better known as functional literacy, is intended for people who receive late education. Statistical data in East Java illustrate that many people between the ages of ten and 44 with illiterate status come from underprivileged families, representing a portion of the working-age population (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021). To provide opportunities to obtain education and meet the goals of the illiteracy eradication movement, Aisyiyah's functional literacy program aims to develop reading, writing, and arithmetic abilities. Additionally, the program provides religious education through three learning stages: the eradication stage, the construction stage, and the preservation stage. The functional literacy program also provides diplomas that can be used administratively to qualify for work. This approach is related to the principle of liberal feminism that both women and men have equal rights to advance themselves (Aryanti, 2013; Nura'ini, 2013).

Aisyiyah's mission is based on the desire for all women to be able to read, impact their quality of life, and solve the problems they face, including their economy. Aisyiyah considers the economic value obtained from education while empowering women's knowledge. Aisyiyah Sidoarjo, Malang, and Banyuwangi created programs that required Aisyiyah women to work through writing. Each informant explained this. According to Participant L,

Each of our leaders requires us to subscribe to and read walidah magazines and Aisyiyah's voice. Apart from that, we also encourage members to write in the rubrics provided in walidah magazine so that it can be a means of expressing their ideas. (Participant L, personal communication, June 9, 2018)

Based on these interviews, we see ways in which Aisyiyah encouraged Aisyiyah women to write their ideas, information, insights, and knowledge in written form, which were then recorded in *Suara Aisyiyah*. *Suara Aisyiyah* was then sold and now has economic value to its contributors. It can be seen that Aisyiyah women have been successful in empowering themselves and in feeling challenged by making significant efforts to better themselves through these specific literacy practices.

In this era of the information society, the commodity that sustains people's lives is information. The information society can manage information to present it in a new form and package it using technology. In this case, Aisyiyah uses a computer to document women's reflections in *Suara Aisyiyah*, which becomes a commodity with economic value. An information society exists when the quality of life, the spread of social change, and economic development depend on information and its usefulness (Aryanti, 2013; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Lukens-Bull & Woodward, 2020).

The purpose of empowerment refers to the conditions or results achieved by a localized symbiotic process to enact social change. People who are empowered have the knowledge and ability to meet their physical, economic and social needs (Christian-Smith & Kellor, 2021; Nazarenko et al., 2022; Yanti et al., 2020). The efforts made by Aisyiyah, Banyuwangi, Malang, and Sidoarjo reflect women's personal empowerment and community empowerment. By providing multiple avenues of access to reading, Aisyiyah has contributed to meeting the information needs of society, especially women, in the current information age. Thus, empowerment through access to reading provided by Aisyiyah Banyuwangi, Malang, and Sidoarjo can help improve the ability of the overall Indonesian community to meet their basic needs so that they have freedom, economically, intellectually, and civically so that the citizenry can participate in the processes and decisions that affect them (Guzman et al., 2022; Yanti et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Even though awareness of the importance of education is increasing yearly, the educational profile of women in East Java still needs to be on par with that of men in East Java. The increasing awareness of the importance of women's education has not escaped Aisyiyah's mission as women-centered. Aisyiyah strives to provide supporting initiatives for women to access literacy resources that align with Aisyiyah's vision and mission. Aisyiyah's efforts to improve people's reading habits entail building schools starting from early childhood education programs, kindergarten, elementary school/junior high school, and senior high school/state Islamic senior high school to tertiary institutions, as well as increasing access to libraries and reading materials through community reading parks or reading corners. Aisyiyah also provides magazines and maintains the sustainability of the magazines so that access to reading is given to the community. This supports the community as they face the flood of information from the current information age and developing information technology.

Apart from efforts to provide access to reading, Aisyiyah also seeks to improve women's education and knowledge. These efforts are carried out by improving reading skills and other abilities. Aisyiyah's goal is for women to get their education and understand their rights. By advancing women's education, women's economy will also increase. Aisyiyah understands that education will be achieved if reading skills are supported through access to reading and continuous training. This goal aligns with the objectives of Aisyiyah's functional literacy program to provide sustainable continuing education.

Endnotes

¹ *Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* is something that is widely believed to be good and is in line with the religious values of a society, while *munkar* is something that is contrary to religious values. In simple terms, *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* is upholding what is right and forbidding what is wrong ordering.

² Madrasah Diniyah is an educational institution whose entire curriculum is Islamic religious subjects, allowing students to master religious material well due to the dense and complete religious material presented in the learning process.

³ Madrasah Tsanawiyah is the basic level of formal education in Indonesia, equivalent to junior high school.

⁴ Madrasah Aliyah is a secondary education level in formal education in Indonesia equivalent to senior high school.

⁵ *Da'wah* is an activity that calls for, invites, and summons people to believe in and obey Allah in accordance with Islamic creed, morals, and law in a conscious and planned manner. The main goal of *da'wah* is to achieve happiness in this world and in the hereafter.

⁶ In the education system in Indonesia, the academic pathway for higher education is divided into three strata: Strata 1, which produces undergraduate graduates; Strata 2 for master programs; and Strata 3, which awards doctoral degrees.

⁷ The movement aimed to eradicate ignorance which became one of the pillars of Aisyiyah's struggle, which continued by carrying out the first eradication of illiteracy for both Arabic and Latin in 1923. In this activity, the participants, girls and housewives, studied together to increase knowledge and promote women's participation in public.

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Tri Soesantari (tri.soesantari@fisip.unair.ac.id) is a lecturer in the Department of Information and Library in Universitas Airlangga. She specializes in Library and Information Science and is active in organizations, namely PSGIS, which studies and publishes articles about gender, women, and children. Tri Soesantari is a powerful force in the workplace and uses her positive attitude and tireless energy to encourage others to work hard and succeed. She is also active in social activities organized by the government, especially those related to women's empowerment. Areas of interest include information organization, collection development, and the field of Information and Gender. The courses she teaches are also in accordance with her interests and expertise.

Fitri Mutia (fitri.mutia@fisip.unair.ac.id) is working as teaching staff for the Department of Information and Library in Universitas Airlangga. Fitri Mutia has a research interest in Library and Information Science. Besides being a lecturer, he currently serves as Secretary of the Department. Areas of expertise are related to Information and Special Groups, Knowledge Management, and Information Ethics.

Yunus Abdul Halim (yunus.halim@fisip.unair.ac.id) has been working as a teaching staff in the Department of Information and Library since 2008. Currently, he is the head of the Archives of Universitas Airlangga. He is interested in Software Engineering, Information Systems, Data Science, and Network Society.

Adam Syarief Thamrin (adamsyariefthamrin@gmail.com) is the human resources and marketing director of PT Catur Putra Perkasa Related. Thamrin is an experienced researcher with a demonstrated history of working in the writing and editing industry. He is skilled in negotiation, management, budgeting, and human resources development. Thamrin is a graduate and a research assistant at Universitas Airlangga.

