

MUSLIM YOUTH AND PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVISM *The Case of Tangan Recehan and Griya Derma*

Eja Armaz Hardi

UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi-Indonesia

eja.armaz.hardi@uinjambi.ac.id

Abstract

Since the last two decades, charity movements have been flourishing in Indonesian Islamic landscape. These organisations are involving not only state sponsored organizations, but also non-government associations and professional industries. This article exclusively discusses the youth-based charity movements in two important Islamic universities in Indonesia and tries to offer a new glance of youth charity movement as to which their movement relates to the issue of identity and social welfare. The article uses a qualitative method through a systematic literature review, in-depth interview, and observation to the activities of two youth-based charity movements at two state Islamic universities in Jambi and Surabaya. This paper further argues that the spirit of philanthropic movement does not only depend on economic wealth, but also on social solidarity, Islamic principle of economic distribution, and networks among the students that have been successfully translated into both social welfare activism and humanitarian activities.

[Sejak dua dekade terakhir, gerakan amal di Indonesia telah mengalami perkembangan yang signifikan. Lembaga-lembaga ini tidak hanya yang berafiliasi dengan pemerintah melainkan juga asosiasi yang muncul dari akar rumput dan lembaga swasta profesional. Artikel ini secara khusus mengkaji tentang gerakan amal kepemudaan di dua Universitas Islam Negeri di Indonesia dan mencoba menawarkan gagasan baru gerakan amal

pemuda yang terkait dengan isu identitas dan kesejahteraan sosial. Dengan menggunakan kajian pustaka, wawancara mendalam dan observasi di UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya dan UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, artikel ini mengemukakan bahwa semangat gerakan filantropi tidak hanya bertumpu pada kekayaan ekonomi, tetapi juga pada solidaritas sosial, prinsip distribusi ekonomi Islam, dan jaringan di kalangan mahasiswa yang telah berhasil diterjemahkan ke dalam gerakan kesejahteraan sosial dan kemanusiaan.]

Keywords: *Islamic Charity, Youth Movement, Social Organization, Social Solidarity*

Introduction

Since the last two decades, there has been a rising social welfare activism involving youth in Indonesia. In 2020, an independent philanthropy watch organization, the Direktori Filantropi Indonesia, reported 80 groups of Indonesian philanthropic organization with multiples programs, such as on education, health, food, housing, and environment. In terms of institutional background, these philanthropic activities involve varieties of organizational forms which include family foundation (17%), corporation (18%), Islamic philanthropic institution (27%), independent organization (38%), media-based philanthropy (1%).¹ Youth have been the backbone of these philanthropic activism as they are actively running these philanthropic organizations which promote the philanthropic activities through their social media platforms, and invite wealthy individuals to join their social welfare activism.

There have been studies on charity organizations and activism in Indonesia. A renowned Indonesian scholar, Amelia Fauzia, devoted her studies to the history of Indonesian charity organizations and charitable practices,² while Hilman Latief through his illuminating articles discussed

¹ "Direktori Filantropi Indonesia—Memupuk Kedermawanan Menuai Kemandirian," 2020.

² Amelia Fauzia, "Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia: Modernization, Islamization, and Social Justice," *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2017, pp. 223; Amelia Fauzia, "Faith and The State: A History of Islamic Philanthropy

the proliferation of charity organizations, their social welfare activities and ties with transnational interests.³ As an attempt through sociological perspective, Barman and Godbout found that the giving activism is based on the actor of giving individual or collective motivation, such as altruism, self-interest, reciprocity, and moral and economic duties.⁴ As Hasan also argues, Islamic charity activism is motivated by the donators' wish to receive the bounces from the God even in the worldly life and hereafter through helping others.⁵ Kart-Gerro's article exclusively addresses the roles of youth in philanthropy activities and argues that there was a significant differentiation of environmental behavior among university students in five countries: Canada, Germany, Israel, South Korea, and the United States.⁶ In the same vein, Gorczyca and Hartman through their study conclude that the contemporary youth or the millennials are at the forefront of many charitable organizations.⁷

in Indonesia," *Ph.D Thesis*, The University of Melbourne, 2008, p. 1.

³ Hilman Latief, "Islamic Charities Ans Social Activism: Welfare, Dakwah and Politics in Indonesia," *Ph.D Thesis*, Universiteit Utrecht, 2012, p. 3; Hilman Latief, "Islamic Philanthropy and The Private Sector in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2013, pp. 175; Hilman Latief, "Health Provision for the Poor Islamic Aid and the Rise of Charitable Clinics in Indonesia," *South East Asia Research*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2010, pp. 503; Hilman Latief, "Islamic Charities and Dakwah Movement in a Muslim Minority Island: The Experience of Niasan Muslims," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2014, pp. 221-44; Hilman Latief, "The Politics of Benevolence: Political Patronage of Party-Based Charitable Organizations in Contemporary Indonesian Islam," *Al-Jami'ab: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 2, 2013, pp. 337.

⁴ Emily Barman, "The Social Bases of Philanthropy," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 2017, pp. 275; Jacques T. Godbout, "The Moral of the Gift," *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 1998, pp. 557; Jacques T. Godbout, "The Moral of the Gift," *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 1998, pp. 557.

⁵ Riaz Hassan, "Giving and Gaining: Philanthropy and Social in Muslim Society," *Labore Journal of Policy Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2007, pp. 25-34.

⁶ Tally Katz-Gerro (et.al.), "Environmental Philanthropy and Environmental Behavior in Five Countries: Is There Convergence Among Youth?," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 2015, pp. 1486.

⁷ Matthew Gorczyca and Rosanne L. Hartman, "The New Face of Philanthropy: The Role of Intrinsic Motivation in Millennials' Attitudes and Intent to Donate to Charitable Organizations," *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, Vol. 29, No.

This article discusses charity movement among university students of important two Indonesian State Islamic Universities (Universitas Islam Negeri/UIN) in Jambi and Surabaya. It examines their organisational umbrella for the movement, namely *Tangan Recehan* of UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin in Jambi and *Griya Derma* of UIN Sunan Ampel in Surabaya. It delves into a question of how the youth embrace the sense of social solidarity for serving others while they do not belong to the group of financial establishments. Based on literature reviews on Indonesian charitable activism and fieldwork activities, this article argues that charitable movement is not only provided by the wealthy and established organization, but also develops among the young students who accumulate the sense of social solidarity which is closely tied to the youth's social capital and networks.

A Brief History of Indonesian Charity Movement

The practice of Islamic charity and philanthropy movements in Indonesia can be traced back to the Dutch colonial era, the early period of Indonesian independence, the Indonesian New Order (1966-1998), and periods following the fall of Soeharto's New Order in 1998. The position of Islamic charity organisations during the colonial period seems to be distanced from the colonial government's intervention. These organisations particularly serve as a venue for social change.⁸ During the New Order, the government tried to infiltrate these charity organisations which led to the confrontation between the state and civil society organisations,⁹ if not to mention cultivating the birth of

4, 2017, pp. 1.

⁸ Fauzia, "Faith and The State: A History of Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia"; Mukhlis Rahmanto, "Berderma dan Sejarah Sosial Politik Islam Indonesia," *Ajkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2015, pp. 269.

⁹ Najib Kailani and Martin Slama, "Accelerating Islamic Charities in Indonesia: Zakat, Sedekah and the Immediacy of Social Media," *South East Asia Research*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2020, pp. 70.

public resistance.¹⁰ The fall of New Order 1998 further accelerates the emergence of Indonesian Islamic charity organisations. According to the data of Direktori Filantropi Indonesia 2020, there are 80 registered philanthropy institutions; 16 philanthropy institutions founded by family circle, 17 initiated by the corporation, 26 institutions established by Islamic organization, 1 media-based philanthropy institution, and 36 other organisational forms.¹¹ Activities of these philanthropic organisations are particularly dedicated to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) which include programs of poverty alleviation, education, urban and habitation, food security and nutrition, environment and conservation, art and culture, health access, economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, and women and children empowerment.¹²

Importantly, managerial innovation and digital technologies explain the proliferation of philanthropic activities and organisations after the New Order. *Lazîsmu* (the *Zakat* Board of Muhammadiyah), for instance, represents a role model of the well-managed philanthropic institution,¹³ while other organizations address a specific issue, such as philanthropic activities for post-conflict communities.¹⁴ In Surabaya, *Lazîsmu* distributed *zakat* (almsgiving) interactively through a creative program

¹⁰ Hilman Latief, "Contesting Almsgiving in Post-New Order Indonesia," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2014, pp. 17; Fauzia, "Faith and The State: A History of Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia"; Abdurrohman Kasdi, "Filantropi Islam untuk Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Umat (Model Pemberdayaan ZISWAF di BMT se-Kabupaten Demak)," *Iqtishodia*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2016, pp. 170.

¹¹ "Direktori Filantropi Indonesia-Memupuk Kedermawanan Menuai Kemandirian."

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Zakiyuddin Baidhaw, "Lazîsmu and Remaking the Muhammadiyah's New Way of Philanthropy," *Al-Jami'ab: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 2, 2015, pp. 387; Zakiyuddin Baidhaw, "Lazîsmu and Remaking the Muhammadiyah's New Way of Philanthropy," *Al-Jami'ab: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 2, 2015, pp. 387.

¹⁴ Putut Suharso, Sarbini Sarbini, and Dicky Sumarsono, "The Philanthropy Culture in the Local Area: The Role Study of Philanthropy Institution after the Termination of PNPM in Boyolali Regency," *E3S Web of Conferences*, Vol. 68, 2018, p. 67.

for empowerment of the *zakat* recipient (*mustahiq*).¹⁵ Importantly, social media platforms help to promote philanthropic activities and to invite distanced-audience to join the work which later cultivates social awareness and public participation. Social-media platforms reserve as a medium to support the rise of public trust as inviting donators to send their *zakat* and *infak* (donation).¹⁶ Likewise, the Indonesian syariah capital market has facilitated the *muzaki* (those who are obliged to send their *zakat*) to deliver their *zakat* through stock exchange which engulfs the practice of giving among the middle-class Muslim and major business practitioners.¹⁷

The Role of Islamic Charity

Islam encourages Muslim communities (*ummah*) to assist the unfortunate people through *zakat* which reserves as one of essential Islamic doctrines. The practice of *zakat* is supposed to be manifested through Muslim's daily activities.¹⁸ The manifestation of social solidarity through *zakat*, *sedekah*, and *wakaf* (endowment) has been embodied in the Muslim as their religious commitment and becomes a bridge to connect the contemporary activities to the hereafter¹⁹ as it is believed that philanthropic activities can solve the problems of poverty, social and economic inequality. Jonathan Benthall, argues the *zakat* system is a mechanism that enables to

¹⁵ Arin Setiyowati, "Empowering Islamic Philanthropy: Analysis of Entrepreneurial Capital Assistance Program by LAZIMU Surabaya City," *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2019, pp. 1018.

¹⁶ Makhrus, "Social Media Based Islamic Philanthropy to Develop Philanthropy Awareness in Indonesia," *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Community Development (AMCA 2018)* (Presented at the 2018 3rd International Conference on Education, Sports, Arts and Management Engineering (ICESAME 2018), Quezon City, Philippines: Atlantis Press, 2018).

¹⁷ Eja Armaz Hardi, "Filantropi Islam: Zakat Saham di Pasar Modal Syariah Indonesia," *Jurnal Bimas Islam*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2020, pp. 57.

¹⁸ Amy Singer, "Giving Practices in Islamic Societies," *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, Vol. 80, No. 2, 2013, pp. 341.

¹⁹ Marta Bivand Erdal and Kaja Borchgrevink, "Transnational Islamic Charity as Everyday Rituals," *Global Networks*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2017, pp. 30.

provide the public services while in the absence of a state.²⁰

In Islam, the doctrine of *zakat* dictates rigid regulation due to the *muḥākeki* (recipient) is limited to eight recipients: *fakir, miskin, fi sabilillah, mualaf, gharim, ibnu sabil, amil zakat, riqab* (QS. At Taubah: 60). Unlike *zakat* which is included as one of religious obligations, Islam also recognizes a voluntary practice of giving through the concept of *sedekah, infak, and wakaf*. Unlike *zakat*, these later three are more flexible as non-obligatory Islamic instruction²¹ and shows a strong innovative model for the sake of philanthropic aims. In Beringharjo Yogyakarta for instance, the Islamic Micro Finance (BMT) and Zakat Board (BAZNAS) have assisted the poor to scale up their daily income²² and helped the community development through the top-down system.²³

Youth Charity and Social Solidarity: The Case of Tangan Recehan and Griya Derma

The participation of youth has been strongly essential in social and political transformation in Indonesia.²⁴ Contemporary participation of youth in social transformation includes their involvement in philanthropic actions and programs through digital technologies. We could point at the digital platform of *kitabisa.com* and *ayopeduli.com* which successfully mobilise financial resources and donation through the digital technologies. These digital platform for resource mobilization is essential to explain youth participation in the practice of giving in contemporary Indonesia.

²⁰ Jonathan Benthall, "Financial Worship: The Quranic Injunction to Almsgiving," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1999, pp. 28.

²¹ Ahmad Kaleem and Saima Ahmed, "The Quran and Poverty Alleviation: A Theoretical Model for Charity-Based Islamic Microfinance Institutions (MFIs)," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 2010, pp. 408.

²² Eja Armaz Hardi, "Analisis Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Muslim Miskin melalui Qardhul Hasan: Studi Kasus Program Baitul Maal BMT Beringharjo Yogyakarta tahun 2013" *Thesis*, Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta, 2013.

²³ Mari Adachi, "Discourses of Institutionalization of Zakat Management System in Contemporary Indonesia: Effect of the Revitalization of Islamic Economics," *International Journal of Zakat*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2018, pp. 32.

²⁴ Manneke Budiman (et.al.), "New Enemy of the State: Youth in Post-New Order Indonesia," *Youth; Future Agents of Change or Guardians of Establishment*, 2012, p. 15.

The platform particularly tells the unfortunate condition of the target for donation and invites the audience to donate. In so doing, youth is capable of delivering good amid their limited financial condition as we also see through the philanthropic practices of *Tangan Recehan* and *Griya Derma*.

Tangan Recehan was established in 2018 by a group student belonged to the Islamic Economics and Business Faculty (FEBI) of UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin. The *Tangan Recehan* firstly appeared through social media as it was campaigning for social donation.²⁵ It is said that the idea of *Tangan Recehan* is particularly related to students' motivation to confront the problem of poverty. It later transformed into a modern organization and defined the managerial aspect of the association which is divided into the manager, the survey team, the publication section, and the action team. The manager is responsible to set programs and networks. The survey team has to perform activities of survey and to collect data of targeted individuals for donation.²⁶ The collected data later is sent the publication section that design e-flyer calling for donation. The flyer informs personal data of the recipient which is shared through social media platform of *Tangan Recehan*.²⁷

In its initial foundation, *Tangan Recehan* relies on donations of 30 active members of the organization which contributes 10.000 rupiah (USD 0.80) every month. With this minimum contribution, the member later campaign for expanding the donations involving a larger public and audience. The invitation ends successfully as the *Tangan Recehan* received

²⁵ Muhammad Mar'ie, "Interview with Founder of *Tangan Recehan*: Social Organization Background and Mechanisms, Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi," November 3, 2020.

²⁶ Muhammad Anggik, "Interview with Surveyor Team of *Tangan Recehan*, Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi," October 30, 2020.

²⁷ Muhammad Anggik, "Interview with Founder of *Tangan Recehan*, Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi," October 30, 2020.

“public trust”²⁸ when some generous donators joined the work.²⁹ It is worth noting that the donators is not closely motivated by the religious reasons but also by a more secular motivation, e.g. to lessen economic gap and social inequality,³⁰ while for the activists of *Tangan Recehan*, their activities could guarantee personal responsibility to participate in social works and activities.³¹ For the members of *Tangan Recehan*, it is imperative to maintain the public trust.³² In so doing, they provided a detailed annual report of their activities, financial reports, photos and the testimony of the recipient which were disseminated through their social media release and personal digital message services.³³

Like *Tangan Recehan*, *Griya Derma*—previously named *Gubuk Derma*—was established by a group of students of the Faculty of Shariah of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya in 2017. However, the *Griya Derma* is different from *Tangan Recehan* as the former serves as an official student organization (Unit Kegiatan Mahasiswa/UKM) of the faculty. Its organizational vision aims to be a professional institution, accountable, honest, trusted in *zakat*, *wakaf*, *infak* and *sedekah*, and to assist the increasing of the public welfare.³⁴ Importantly, the organisation reserves as an umbrella to help

²⁸ Makhrus, “Social Media Based Islamic Philanthropy to Develop Philanthropy Awareness In Indonesia,” p. 365.

²⁹ Mar’ie, “Interview with Founder of Tangan Recehan: Social Organization Background and Machanisms, Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi.”

³⁰ Benaouda Bensaid (et.al.), “Ethico-Spiritual Dimensions of Charity: An Islamic Perspective,” *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2013, pp. 171.

³¹ Muhammad Anggik, “Interview with Surveyor of Tangan Recehan: Social Organization Machanisms, Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi,” November 3, 2020.

³² Mar’ie, “Interview with Founder of Tangan Recehan: Social Organization Background and Machanisms, Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi.”

³³ Tangan Recehan, “Observation of The Tangan Recehan Report Though Instagram Flatform,” Instagram, November 3, 2020.

³⁴ Griya Derma, “E-Flayer: Griya Derma Vision and Mission in the Instagram Flatform.” (@griyaderma_uinsa, 2017).

fellow students from have-not families through charity activities.³⁵ To do so, the activists of *Griya Derma* invites their fellow students to participate in *sedekah* activities and runs donating-booth in the campus area. A significant number of collected donation is sent to assist the students who failed to pay their tuition fee.³⁶ Later, as the organization grows, *Griya Derma* initiated various programs, such as scholarship, *Jum'at berkah* (blessing Friday), and caring of the orphanage. The activities of *Griya Derma* attracted a number of major foundations, such as Kalla Group Foundation belonged to the former vice president Jusuf Kalla and the international Ford Foundation that facilitated the scholarship program of *Griya Derma*.³⁷ Nevertheless, *Griya Derma* believes that scholarship is not supposedly delivered by wealthy individuals or organizations, but also by anyone who is capable of affording donation, including students of the university. Outside the university, *Griya Derma*, in collaboration with the National Wakaf Movement (Gerakan Wakaf Indonesia/GWI), has been actively involved in charity activities, specifically targeting vulnerable groups impacted by the Covid-19. This later activity is active in some cities in East Java Province, such as Surabaya, Pacitan, Bojonegoro, Jombang, and Probolinggo.³⁸

Student participation in various programs of philanthropic activities such as as *Tangan Recehan* and *Griya Derman* indeed demonstrates important insights with regards to contemporary development of Muslim youth activism in contemporary Indonesia. Following the fall of the New Order, philanthropic activities reserve as a new arena where the youth strive for social transformation through wealth mobilization and

³⁵ Faizal Yulianto, "Interview with the Online Promotion Devision," Voice Call, October 3, 2020.

³⁶ Yulianto, "Interview with the Online Promotion Devision."

³⁷ Faizal Yulianto, "Interview with the Online Promotion Devision," December 10, 2019.

³⁸ Yulianto, "Interview with the Online Promotion Devision."

donation.³⁹ The practice of giving is indeed framed as both humanitarian activities and religious duties. Student philanthropic activities have facilitated transformation in the Muslim practice of giving as to which digital technology is crucial in resource mobilization.⁴⁰ Digital technology particularly social media platforms enlarge the public participation in charity activism. As Fauziah argues, the philanthropic private-sector has shown snapshot in modern philanthropy,⁴¹ while the youth to do the same in their own ways. Islamic youth charity movement has demonstrated a snapshot of how the youth contribute to social change starting from the vulnerable group of their surroundings.

Conclusion

The proliferation of Indonesian youth activism demonstrates the changing orientation of youth movement which expands, let alone educational and political, to philanthropic activities. The call for social transformation and youth participation in philanthropic activities have paved a way for university students of UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin of Jambi and UIN Sunan Ampel of Surabaya to establish philanthropic organisation of *Tangan Recehan* and *Griya Derma*. University students are the backbone for the charity activities of the organization which successfully cultivate public trust through professionalism and transparency of the distribution of *zakat*, *infak* and *sedekah*. Both *Tangan Recehan* and *Griya Derma* are two vivid examples of contemporary roles of Indonesian Muslim youth in a wider social transformation through the projects of economic transformation towards social-economic equity and equality.

³⁹ Barman, "The Social Bases of Philanthropy," 275; Godbout, "The Moral of the Gift," p. 557.

⁴⁰ Mar'ie, "Interview with Founder of Tangan Recehan: Social Organization Background and Mechanisms, Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi"; Yulianto, "Interview with the Online Promotion Division."

⁴¹ Fauzia, "Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia," p. 223.

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