

ARTICLE

Empowering Youth in Islamic Philanthropy: Addressing Challenges and Enhancing Sustainable Engagement

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Abstract

Youth play a vital role in the sustainability of Islamic philanthropic organizations in Indonesia, serving as drivers, influencers, and beneficiaries. However, challenges such as career instability and limited understanding of Islamic philanthropy often hinder their long-term involvement in philanthropic activism. This study aims to analyze the strategic role of youth in Islamic philanthropic activism in Indonesia, identify the challenges they face, and explore solutions to enhance their sustainable engagement. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, examining three Islamic philanthropic organizations in Indonesia: DT Peduli, Dompot Dhuafa, and Rumah Amal Salman. Data were collected through observations and document analysis. The findings reveal that youth are significant in managing technology and social media-based philanthropic programs. They also act as influencers, encouraging other young people to participate in philanthropic activities. However, their status as volunteers, without stable career prospects, often results in temporary involvement. To promote more sustainable participation, institutional reforms are needed to provide professional development opportunities for youth in philanthropy.

Keywords: *Youth; Islamic Philanthropy; Voluntarism; Technology; Philanthropic Organizations*

Kaum muda memiliki peran penting dalam keberlanjutan lembaga filantropi Islam di Indonesia, baik sebagai penggerak, influencer, maupun penerima manfaat. Namun, tantangan yang dihadapi kaum muda dalam aktivisme filantropi, seperti kurangnya stabilitas karier dan keterbatasan pemahaman tentang filantropi Islam, sering kali menghambat keterlibatan jangka panjang mereka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran strategis kaum muda dalam aktivisme filantropi Islam di Indonesia dan mengidentifikasi tantangan yang dihadapi, serta solusi yang dapat diterapkan untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan mereka secara berkelanjutan. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan mengkaji tiga lembaga filantropi Islam di Indonesia: DT Peduli, Dompot Dhuafa, dan Rumah Amal Salman. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan studi dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kaum muda memiliki peran signifikan dalam pengelolaan program filantropi berbasis teknologi dan media sosial. Mereka juga berfungsi sebagai influencer untuk menarik generasi muda lainnya agar berpartisipasi dalam kegiatan filantropi. Namun, status mereka sebagai volunteer tanpa jaminan karier yang stabil membuat keterlibatan mereka dalam lembaga filantropi sering bersifat sementara. Untuk meningkatkan partisipasi yang lebih berkelanjutan, diperlukan reformasi sistem kelembagaan yang memungkinkan kaum muda berkembang secara profesional di dalam dunia filantropi.

A. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, philanthropy in Indonesia has experienced significant growth. Data from various institutions indicate a consistent rise in donations, participation, and philanthropic management. According to the 2022 report from the *Indonesian Philanthropy Forum (IDF)*, the philanthropy sector in Indonesia has seen an annual growth of approximately 10-15% over the last decade. This reflects the increasing involvement of individuals, companies, and organizations in philanthropic activities, signaling a positive trend in social awareness and community empowerment. Such growth also highlights the important role of philanthropy as a means of wealth distribution to strengthen the economy and expand social safety networks.

One group that has increasingly shown active participation in philanthropy is the younger generation. A 2020 survey by *Kopernik* and *GoPay* revealed that young people, particularly Generation Z and millennials, dominate online donation activities, with 51% of donations made by Gen Z and 40% by millennials (Kopernik 2020). This data suggests that youth are not only digital consumers but also use technology as a tool for donating and engaging in social movements. Their active involvement in philanthropy is a positive sign, indicating substantial potential to expand the future impact of philanthropy.

Despite this significant growth, research on philanthropy in Indonesia, particularly Islamic philanthropy, still faces several challenges. Firstly, limited research specifically explores the dynamics of youth participation in philanthropy. Most studies focus on institutional aspects (Sirajul Fuad Zis et al. 2021), management systems (Taufik Achmad Dwi Putro et al. 2021), or the economic impact of Islamic philanthropy (Nurul Rahmadani et al. 2020), without delving deeply into how young people play a strategic role in sustaining these movements. Furthermore, research tends to overlook the creativity and innovation of youth in driving

philanthropy, especially in the digital era (Fitria Khairum Nisa et al. 2020). Therefore, this study aims to explore how young people contribute to advancing Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia, particularly through their creativity and innovation in running and developing *pesantren* sustainably. Academically, this research fills the gap regarding the strategic role of youth in Islamic philanthropy. Practically, its findings are expected to provide guidance for philanthropic institutions in designing more inclusive and effective programs, ultimately enhancing sustainable community empowerment.

B. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative approach to deeply understand how *pesantren* respond to youth involvement in philanthropic activities. The qualitative method allows the researcher to explore social dynamics and behavior through the direct perspectives of participants (Creswell 2013). Through this approach, the study captures diverse viewpoints emerging from the interactions between philanthropic institutions and young people, and the strategic role youth play in sustaining Islamic philanthropic activities.

Data collection was conducted through observation and document analysis. Observations were aimed at directly observing how *pesantren* engage with young people, both those involved in the organization and those participating in other philanthropic activities. These observations occurred over a month, formally (through pre-arranged meetings) and informally. Additionally, documents such as social media data, official websites, and philanthropic institution apps were used to corroborate and confirm data obtained from observations.

Data analysis was conducted by comparing information from various sources, both from observations and documents (Creswell 2014).

Data gathered from several informants were then analyzed in depth to identify patterns or similarities regarding the role of youth in Islamic philanthropy. Data validity was ensured through triangulation, comparing data from different philanthropic institutions to ensure consistency and accuracy of the information obtained. Furthermore, documentation from social media and the institutions' websites was used to verify and enrich interview results.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. *Transformation of Islamic Philanthropic Institutions: Empowerment, Innovation, and Digitalization for Youth*

Philanthropic institutions are expected to adapt to the times, particularly in the management and distribution of *zakat*. Normatively, *zakat* is distributed to eight groups of recipients as prescribed by the Qur'an: the poor, the needy, those burdened by debt, those striving in the cause of Allah, *zakat* administrators, slaves, converts to Islam, and travelers (Al-Qur'an Al-Karim 1971). However, institutions have more flexibility in distribution for philanthropic funds that come from non-*zakat* sources, provided the funds are used according to religious and humanitarian principles (Ministry of Religious Affairs 1971).

Over time, the distribution of philanthropic funds has evolved from consumptive assistance to productive programs. Many institutions are transitioning from direct assistance to empowering programs to transform beneficiaries (*mustahiq*) into *zakat* payers (*muzakki*). These programs are designed by each institution with creative approaches tailored to the needs and characteristics of the beneficiaries (Saeed et al. 2020).

One example is *Darut Tauhid Peduli*, a philanthropic institution founded by the *Darut Tauhid Foundation*. This institution has developed a program called "Tangguh" aimed at young people. The program includes

Mahasiswa Tangguh, UKM Tangguh, Pendidik Tangguh, and Petani Tangguh. Through this initiative, the institution provides financial assistance and training tailored to each group's professional needs, such as digital marketing, management, and leadership training. Additionally, *Darut Tauhid Peduli* offers management consultation services for schools needing support in managing educational institutions (*Darut Tauhid Peduli* 2021).

Rumah Amal Salman, a philanthropic institution affiliated with *Salman ITB Mosque*, takes a different approach. They focus on providing scholarships through two main programs: *Basiswa Aktivois Salman* and *Basiswa Baraya*. *Basiswa Aktivois Salman* is designed for economically disadvantaged yet academically talented university students, while *Basiswa Baraya* targets elementary, junior high, and high school students in Bandung. *Rumah Amal Salman* also offers the *Amil Muda* program, aimed at training university graduates who are *hafidh* (memorizers of the Qur'an) to contribute to managing Islamic philanthropy (*Rumah Amal Salman* 2021).

Another notable institution, *LazisMu*, offers a range of flagship programs, including the *Basiswa Mentari*, *1000 Sarjana Scholarship*, and *MSC (Muhammadiyah Senior Care)*, which focuses on senior citizens. *LazisMu* also runs programs that empower families economically, such as *BUEKA (Bina Usaha Ekonomi Keluarga Aisyiyah)* and *Riasa Corner*, providing capital and training to women across Indonesia. Additionally, *LazisMu* operates health services through the *Mobile Clinic* and the *Clinic Apung Said Tuhuleley* (*LazisMu* 2021).

The management of Islamic philanthropy has advanced with the adoption of digital technology, enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency in collecting and distributing *zakat*, *infaq*, and *sadaqah*. Digitalization allows philanthropic institutions to easily facilitate donations and ensure precise fund distribution. For instance, *Darut Tauhid Peduli*, *LazisMu*, and *Rumah Amal Salman* have developed digital platforms

enabling the public to donate online conveniently and transparently (Sulaiman and al-Kareem 2020).

Each philanthropic institution now offers digital services for donations. *Darut Tauhid Peduli* provides online donation services through <https://dtpeduli.org/donasi>, while *LazisMu* offers similar services via <https://lazismu.org/program/404/donasi/>, and *Rumah Amal Salman* operates a donation platform at <https://rumahamal.org>. These services simplify participation in philanthropy, allowing people to contribute from anywhere.

The growth of philanthropic programs focused on youth empowerment is closely linked to their dynamic nature and familiarity with digital technology. Youth are one of the main target groups in many scholarship and training programs provided by philanthropic institutions. By providing young people with access to improve their skills and education, these institutions aim to create a more independent generation ready to contribute actively to society (Harahap and Suryani 2020).

As a generation deeply engaged with the digital world, young people play a crucial role in the innovation and transformation of these philanthropic institutions. Their involvement is not only limited to beneficiaries but also as key drivers within the organizations. Therefore, human resources management in philanthropic institutions places significant emphasis on youth, both as recipients and as actors in the management and distribution processes (Budi et al. 2020).

With the increasing role of technology and youth in Islamic philanthropy, institutions must continuously innovate to ensure organizational sustainability and attract more donors and *zakat* payers. One way to achieve this is by strengthening human resources and digital infrastructure to be better prepared for future challenges and remain relevant in addressing the community's needs (Suryani and Wahyudi 2021).

The potential of young people in the various transformations of philanthropic programs is immense, especially in supporting the sustainability and innovation of these programs. As a generation that has grown up with digital technology, youth excel in leveraging technology to streamline the management and distribution of philanthropy. Their expertise in social media, digital marketing, and tech-based applications can transform philanthropy's operations, making it more efficient and accessible to many people. Moreover, youth tend to have a strong drive for innovation, helping philanthropic institutions adapt to changing times and dynamic societal demands (Budi et al. 2020).

Furthermore, youth involvement in empowerment programs has a long-term impact on them and their communities. Programs that involve skill development, scholarships, and economic empowerment offer young people the opportunity to improve their quality of life and that of their communities. Through these programs, young people become beneficiaries and active agents of change in supporting the sustainability of Islamic philanthropy. Given this potential, youth are key to the transformation of philanthropy, shifting it from mere charity distribution to a broader empowerment movement with significant impact (Saeed et al. 2020).

2. Youth: Key Agents in Islamic Philanthropic Activities

Youth participation in Islamic philanthropic institutions and organizations increasingly shows a significant influence. They are no longer merely passive aid recipients but have become key actors in managing and implementing philanthropic activities. In institutions like *Darut Tauhid Peduli*, young people are the backbone of the organization's activities. More than 80% of *Darut Tauhid Peduli's* activists are young people, divided into three main clusters: core teams responsible for administration and organization, volunteers actively engaged in fundraising and program implementation, and young people who are both beneficiaries and

representatives of the institution. Programs like *Mahasiswa Tangguh* and *Pelajar Tangguh* position young people as beneficiaries expected to become the primary drivers of the institution's philanthropic efforts (*Darut Tauhid Peduli* 2021).

Programs like *Desa Tangguh* also demonstrate that rural youth, play a significant role in driving social initiatives. Their productivity, coupled with creativity and imagination, enables them to develop innovative solutions to the challenges faced by local communities. This creativity allows philanthropic institutions to craft new approaches to delivering empowerment programs in rural areas, resulting in more sustainable and holistic impacts (Aulia and Zakaria 2021).

Rumah Amal Salman, another example, explicitly adopts an approach almost entirely managed by youth. Nearly 100% of its operations are organized by university students from leading campuses in Bandung, such as ITB, UNPAD, UPI, and UIN. This institution can be described as a philanthropic organization "by the youth, for the youth, and of the youth." Hence, *Rumah Amal Salman* not only serves as a platform for young people to receive scholarships and other benefits but also as a place for them to develop as managers and agents of change. Recipients of benefits, such as *Beasiswa Perintis* students, are actively involved in promoting philanthropic programs on campuses and organizing discussions on *zakat*, continually discussing *zakat* in campus seminars (*Rumah Amal Salman* 2021).

LazisMu has also been successful in engaging youth through its *LazisMu Goes to Campus* program, which introduces the concept of philanthropy to university students. This program was born from the initiative of young people, most of whom were *Muhammadiyah* youth previously involved in organizations like *IPM* (Ikatan Pemuda Muhammadiyah) and *IMM* (Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah). With this background, *LazisMu* has attracted more students and young people to actively donate and even become *zakat* payers (*muzakki*) relatively young.

One example is a young entrepreneur in Yogyakarta who, despite being in his 20s, has regularly paid *zakat* on his business earnings through *LazisMu* (*LazisMu* 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, youth participation in philanthropy significantly impacts the dynamics of organizations and communities. Checkoway and Gutiérrez (2012) argue that an individual's involvement in the community, particularly in conveying messages and attending meetings, can influence the community (Checkoway and Gutiérrez 2012). In this digital era, donation patterns and philanthropic management have also changed, with philanthropic institutions' increasing use of digital applications. Digital technology allows for greater transparency in the fundraising and distribution processes and provides efficient management of charitable funds sustainably (Syujai 2022).

Their strong technological skills, young people have become key drivers in the digitalization of philanthropy. They are not only users of technology but also innovators, modernizing the philanthropy management. With digital platforms, philanthropic institutions can organize donations more efficiently, optimize reporting, and enhance public engagement in social donations. The digital innovations driven by young people have strengthened the Islamic philanthropic system, making it more adaptive to contemporary developments (Alfin and Syauqi 2021).

To ensure philanthropic institutions' sustainability, individuals who can not only manage but also influence others to participate. Young people serve as social influencers in this context, leveraging their communities to promote philanthropic programs. An influencer relies on a strong program or brand and personal testimonies and experiences in engaging in philanthropic activities. This becomes the main appeal for others to get involved, as there are shared lifestyles, interests, and hobbies between the influencer and their audience (Putri and Syarifudin 2022).

With their dynamic lifestyles and tendencies to be active on social media, young people have proven to be effective ambassadors in spreading philanthropic values. They share stories about their involvement in social activities and philanthropic programs through various platforms, reaching a broader audience. The tradition of taking selfies and posting them on social media has become an effective tool for spreading information about philanthropic programs while simultaneously building the institution's presence and credibility in the public eye (Sulaiman and Wahyuni 2022).

Ultimately, the role of youth in philanthropy is not limited to managing or receiving benefits but also as agents of change who can influence public perception and engagement. Their ability to communicate philanthropic messages, through daily activities or social media, has a far-reaching impact on the sustainability and growth of Islamic philanthropic institutions in Indonesia. Thus, young people are not only beneficiaries but also key drivers in transforming Islamic philanthropy towards a brighter and more inclusive future (Hartono and Kurniawan 2021).

3. *The Strategic Role of Youth in the Transformation of Islamic Philanthropy*

Young people hold a strategic role in Islamic philanthropic activism, as managers of institutions and as beneficiaries of philanthropic funds. According to religious and social criteria, they can be categorized as recipients of *zakat* or charitable donations, especially if they fall within the productive and creative *mustahiq* group. For example, *DT Peduli's* "Pelajar Tangguh" and "Mahasiswa Tangguh" programs position youth as institutional representatives. Beneficiaries of these programs are expected to receive assistance and serve as effective communicators in promoting *DT Peduli* to the public (Darut Tauhid Peduli 2021).

A similar approach is seen in institutions like *Rumah Amal Salman* and *Dompot Dhuafa*, which engage youth, particularly students. *Dompot Dhuafa's* management likens partnerships with young people to planting a

tree: although they are planting now, the fruits will be reaped in the future. Programs that focus on mentoring and guiding young people aim to develop leadership skills, social awareness, and economic capabilities. Through such mentoring, the youth's philanthropy role reflects the institution's success in contributing to society (Dompét Dhuafa 2020).

Amidst the growing trend of youth interest in entrepreneurship or social entrepreneurship, Islamic philanthropic institutions offer highly relevant entrepreneurial programs. These programs provide opportunities for financially limited youth to realize their dreams of becoming successful entrepreneurs. Hasanah (2019) asserts that social entrepreneurship requires three key aspects: people, profit, and the environment. These aspects can be integrated into Islamic philanthropic activities through financial, social, and environmentally responsible support (Hasanah 2019).

Therefore, in Islamic philanthropic activism, the role of *mustahiq* (beneficiaries) is fundamental. They are not just recipients of aid but also crucial factors in the sustainability of philanthropic institutions. Without *mustahiq*, the accumulated funds would not significantly impact societal welfare. Wahyuni et al. (2017) stress the importance of *mustahiq* in the philanthropic ecosystem, as they represent the success of programs implemented by the institutions (Wahyuni et al. 2017).

Theoretically, Islamic philanthropy is not merely an act of charity but also a welfare ideology based on principles of social justice. Philanthropic institutions are responsible for distributing funds to eligible recipients and ensuring that beneficiaries can use these funds productively. Mentorship for *mustahiq* is a crucial step in optimizing the use of funds to provide broader and more sustainable benefits (Makhrus & Saepudin 2023).

Most philanthropic institutions clearly envision transforming *mustahiq* into *muzakki* (*zakat* payers). This is achieved through the synergy between *muzakki*, *mustahiq*, and the institutions. In this process, funds are not only used for consumptive purposes but are distributed in the form of

productive programs designed to enhance the capacity and creativity of the beneficiaries. In this way, philanthropic funds can continue to circulate and provide long-term benefits to society (Saeed & Rahman 2020).

As part of their philanthropic strategies, nearly all Islamic philanthropic institutions offer educational scholarships for young people. This reflects the importance of investing in education as a long-term effort to improve human resource quality. Education is one of the most strategic investments for creating social and economic welfare. By providing young people with access to education, philanthropic institutions hope to create a productive generation capable of making significant contributions in the future (Amin & Hasan 2022).

Educational scholarships provided by philanthropic institutions cover various levels, from early childhood education to higher education. Through this support, young people not only improve their skills but also increase their chances of securing better jobs in the future. Furthermore, these educational programs are believed to reduce poverty levels and boost economic productivity among beneficiaries (Makhrus & Saepudin 2023).

Through various youth empowerment-focused programs, Islamic philanthropic institutions have successfully created positive societal changes. Young people, mentored and supported by philanthropic institutions, become not only beneficiaries but also agents of change who advance their communities. Thus, the role of youth in philanthropy is not limited to receiving benefits but also to creating broader and more sustainable social impacts (Hartono & Rahayu 2021).

In summary, the synergy between philanthropic institutions, youth, and communities creates an ecosystem that supports society's social and economic sustainability. By maximizing the role of youth, as recipients and drivers of philanthropy, Islamic philanthropic institutions can continue to grow and make greater contributions to societal development. Innovative

programs focused on education, entrepreneurship, and social leadership are key to this effort (Syafii & Wahyudi 2022).

4. Youth and Challenges in Islamic Philanthropic Activities in Indonesia

The presence of young people plays a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of Islamic philanthropic institutions in Indonesia. Nearly all philanthropic institutions in the country recognize that youth participation is a strategic asset for long-term development. However, despite its acknowledged importance, engaging young people actively in philanthropy is a challenging task. They face various subjective and objective challenges that hinder their full involvement in philanthropic activism (Azizah and Rahman 2022).

One major challenge young people face is the perception that participating in philanthropic activism is primarily a way to gain experience and enhance their resumes. Many become involved in philanthropy with the main goal of adding to their portfolios for future job applications. This involvement is often seen as a temporary step before transitioning to more stable and lucrative career opportunities (Harahap 2021).

Furthermore, the status of being a volunteer in philanthropic institutions also poses a barrier for young people to remain engaged in philanthropy for the long term. As volunteers, they do not receive a regular salary like formal employees; instead, they are compensated based on the percentage of *zakat* funds collected from *muzakki*. Some volunteers earn an honorarium from programs they successfully implement. However, this uncertainty often leads young people to leave their volunteer roles after gaining sufficient experience (Junaidi 2020).

Some who remain active in philanthropy choose to continue their careers within the institution, taking on higher positions such as program leaders or branch managers in regional philanthropic offices. Others, however, leave the institution to establish their organizations, such as non-

governmental organizations (NGOs), reflecting philanthropic activism values. As a result, they transition into sociopreneurs, carving out new, independent spaces for their activism (Rizki and Firdaus 2021).

Another challenge is the need for more understanding of Islamic philanthropy among young people. Not all universities in Indonesia offer specific courses on Islamic philanthropy, leaving many young people to acquire knowledge of philanthropy only through friends or acquaintances who are already involved. This lack of knowledge is one factor hindering young people's interest in engaging more deeply in the world of Islamic philanthropy (Wahyuni 2019).

However, in today's digital era, access to information about philanthropic activities is becoming more accessible. Many institutions upload program videos and educational content on social media platforms. Young people involved in philanthropic institutions often share their experiences through their social media accounts, offering new insights to those interested. This information can help enhance understanding of Islamic philanthropy and inspire other young people to join (Maulida and Fitria 2022).

Beyond the social aspect, Islamic philanthropic activism is also closely linked to religious values. Being an activist in philanthropy is often associated with religious identity and generosity. Young activists actively engaged in philanthropic institutions are often seen as devout individuals, at least in the context of their involvement in charity and generosity. This is an additional motivation for young people to participate in philanthropic institutions (Setiawan and Zain 2020).

To address these challenges, philanthropic institutions must develop strategies that enable young people to remain engaged and contribute to the philanthropic ecosystem for a longer time. More than just relying on volunteerism is required; institutions also need to create career pathways that allow young people to grow into professionals in the field of

philanthropy. Youth must be trained to become competent professionals capable of managing sustainable Islamic philanthropic programs (Yusuf and Rahman 2021).

The responsibility for shaping a generation of professionals in philanthropy does not rest solely on the shoulders of philanthropic institutions; it is also an important task for educational institutions, particularly universities. Universities can provide philanthropy's theoretical and conceptual foundations, while philanthropic institutions offer practical experience in managing *zakat* funds and other social programs. This synergy will create a more prepared and skilled human resource base to face the challenges of the evolving philanthropic world (Kurniawan and Aisyah 2023).

The solution to increasing youth participation and contribution in Islamic philanthropic institutions requires a holistic approach. A supportive ecosystem is needed, ranging from professional training, philanthropy education in universities, to more effective communication strategies to educate and attract youth. In this way, philanthropic institutions can continue to grow and create a larger impact on societal welfare (Hakim and Fadli 2022).

D. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study affirm that young people play a central role in the sustainability and development of Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia. They not only drive program planning and institutional management, particularly in leveraging technology and social media, but also serve as influencers who encourage their peers to engage in philanthropic activities. Additionally, young people are recipients of the programs offered by philanthropic institutions. However, their main challenge is that Islamic philanthropy has not yet become a stable and professional career option for youth. Many view philanthropy as a

temporary stepping stone before transitioning to other careers that offer more stable and attractive salaries. This is because young people are often positioned as volunteers, with honorariums dependent on the funds raised.

The study recommends that Islamic philanthropic institutions provide more opportunities for young people to express their creativity, particularly in developing information systems, promotion, and innovative programs that align with contemporary needs. Additionally, a rethinking of how philanthropic institutions can offer more professional and sustainable career paths is needed, so that youth see philanthropy as something other than a temporary option. This study is limited to a descriptive analysis of three philanthropic institutions; therefore, further research with broader and deeper coverage is needed. Future studies should also explore the role of all stakeholders, including beneficiary communities, to ensure the balance and sustainability of Islamic philanthropic institutions in the future.

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