

Religious Experience in Muslim Philanthropy: An Islamization View

^{1*}Asma Munifatussaidah, ² Arqom Kuswanjono

^{1,2}Gajah Mada University

*asmamunifatussaidah@mail.ugm.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Muslim philanthropy is a practical form of the religious experience of Muslim communities that mediates between individual belief in amaliyah activities and collective ownership to build an Islamic environment. This research explains the representation of religious experience in the context of Muslim philanthropy from the perspective of Islamization, a perspective of returning to Islamic values in behavior. Using the literature method, this research describe Islamic epistemology and theology shape the understanding and depiction of religious experience in the discourse and practice of philanthropy among Muslims. The research also explains the epistemic of Muslim philanthropy and its implications for religious and ethical contexts. By views from Muslim scholars, religious texts, and contemporary discourses on philanthropy, explain the worldview of Islam through religious experience in philanthropy or giving behavior.

KEYWORD:


Religious experience

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, the study of philanthropy has expanded beyond its traditional scope of giving behavior, charitable giving, and some research addresses the broader scope of religion, ethics, spirituality and social justice. Philanthropy, defined as the voluntary action for the common good, has been a characteristic of human societies across cultures and civilizations (Siddiqui et al., 2019). Among Muslim societies, philanthropy has a central position, reflecting the ethics of behaving with fellow citizens in compassion and generosity that are deeply rooted in Islamic religious teachings. Philanthropy has been a cornerstone of society for centuries, rooted in religious teachings emphasizing charity and compassion (Clarke, 2012). And religious beliefs and practices play a significant role in shaping the giving behavior of Muslims. In Islam, giving is closeness to Allah SWT and

contributing to the society. Giving behavior as a means of charitable activities, with a belief in the reward of giving in the afterlife is a manifestation of religious belief and practice in accordance with Islamic principle. In addition, the practice of charity is also an obligation recommended by Islam for Muslims, which further encourages charitable giving (Abubakar, 2017; Siddiqui et al., 2019; Sobiyanto, 2023).

The Islamic religious experience is belief in the unity of Allah, known as tawhid, which is central to Islamic theology (Sidqi, 2018). This concept of tawhid is expressed in the Qur'an and Hadits, the sacred texts of Islam, and is interpreted by Muslims, in different ways, leading to diverse religious experiences (Sidqi, 2018; Yaran, 2004). The representation of religious experience is the concept of Islamization of knowledge, a paradigm that advocates the integration of Islamic principles and values into various of intellectual inquiry (Geaves, 2001). Rooted in Islamic epistemology, the Islamization approach offers a different perspective for interpreting and representing religious experience in philanthropy and charity. According to an Islamic perspective, the spiritual of philanthropy, emphasizing themes of divine worship, ethical wisdom, and communal solidarity inherent in the Islamic tradition (Abubakar, 2017; Yuniartin et al., 2022).

While philanthropy is often viewed as a practical expression of religious beliefs and ethical values, there remains a gap in understanding how Islamic epistemology, theology and spirituality inform the subjective experiences and motivations of individuals and communities engaged in philanthropic endeavors (Hasrin et al., 2023). However, philanthropy traditions have been a part of most religions and cultures throughout history, include Islam (Abubakar, 2017). In Islam, religious beliefs and practices play a significant role in shaping the giving behavior of Muslims. Muslim philanthropy clearly represents religious experiences, theological discourses, and cultural and social practices (Chen, 2024). As with Islamic religious beliefs, Al-Qur'ani injunctions and prophetic traditions are the primary sources of religious authority, shaping the understanding and practice of philanthropy among Muslims.

According to Sidqi (2018) explain the result of research, dimensions of religious experience in post modern that affect individual lives and the well-being of society. Through these various representations, the religious experience in Muslim philanthropy emerges as an expression of faith, compassion and social responsibility as a Muslim. And based on Sobiyanto (2023) the quantitative aspects of philanthropic activities, such as donation patterns, institutional structures, and socio-economic impacts. This quantitative bias often results in a narrow understanding of philanthropy that fails to capture the diverse motivations, beliefs, and experiences shaping philanthropic practices among Muslims.

Then, the representation of religious experience in Muslim philanthropy is often overshadowed by secular discourses on development, humanitarian aid, and social welfare, which prioritize instrumental approaches to philanthropy and spiritual dimensions (Geaves, 2001). As a result, religious experiences in philanthropy are marginalized invisible within mainstream narratives, perpetuating a dichotomy between the secular and the sacred in philanthropic discourse. And according to Yuniartin et al. (2022) the limited discussion of Islamic epistemology and theology, this is because researchers often ignore the Islamic framework and fail to understand the deeper meaning of the ethical of philanthropic behavior in the Islamic context. So that some opinions arise with the response that behavior

is not based on religious and spiritual values.

Based on previous research opinions, however, the religious experience in the context of Muslim philanthropy is still an area that has not been explored by previous research, which is characterized by the limited research on the Islamic worldview used to understand religious experience. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by adopting an Islamization perspective to explore how religious experience is represented in Muslim philanthropy. This study consists in using an Islamization perspective to explore the representation of religious experience in Muslim philanthropy. Offering a different approach from conventional research that ignores the spiritual dimension of philanthropy and underscores the relevance of Islamic principles and values in shaping philanthropic behavior and attitudes.

Based on these considerations, this research aims to describe the representation of religious experience in Muslim philanthropy as a form of Islamizing views in society. This research attempts to contribute to a deeper knowledge of religious experience and social behavior in philanthropy as ethical awareness among Muslims and beyond.

2. Method

This research uses a library research method, designing on a variety of sources, including previous articles relevant to the topic and books, to examine Muslim religious experience and philanthropy from an Islamization view. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify themes and keywords “religious experience”, “Muslim philanthropy”, and “Islamization” searched through official websites of quality and reputable journal and book.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Religious Experience: Islamic Values in Behavior

Al-Qur’an, Islam’s primary religious text, emphasizes the significance of spiritual striving (jihad) and the pursuit of divine knowledge (ilm) as central aspects of religious experience. Verses such as “And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways” (Al-Ankabut:69) highlight the transformative potential of spiritual in deepening one’s connection with God. Moreover, the concept of tauhid (divine unity) underscores the fundamental belief in the oneness of God and the interconnectedness of all creation, providing a theological framework for understanding religious experiences as manifestations of divine presence (Chen, 2024; Geaves, 2001).

Religious experience in Islam is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various aspects of spirituality, mysticism, and the pursuit of a deeper connection with the divine (Chen, 2024). The Islamic religious experience is shaped by the belief in the unity of Allah, known as tauhid, which is central to Islamic theology (Sidqi, 2018). This concept of tawhid is expressed in the Qur’an and Hadith, the sacred texts of Islam, and is interpreted in different ways by Muslims, leading to diverse religious experiences. Religious experience plays a fundamental role in Islam, shaping believers’ spiritual journey and understanding of divine presence. Rooted in a rich tradition of mystical encounters, devotional practices, and ethical teachings, Islamic values offer a framework for interpreting and engaging with religious experiences

(Blom, 2007).

One interpretation of religious experience in Islam emphasizes the transcendence of Allah, viewing the divine as the Holy Other who reveals divine will and mercy through guidance provided by messengers and scriptures. This perspective is in the belief that Allah is the ultimate judge of human actions, and the reward of paradise awaits the obedient while hell is the punishment for evildoers who ignore Allah guidance (Blom, 2007).

Another interpretation of religious experience in Islam focuses on Allah, which emphasizes the divine presence and closeness to humanity (Yuniartin et al., 2022). This perspective is grounded in the belief that Allah is nearer to human beings. The Sufi path (Blom, 2007), a mystical tradition within Islam, seeks union with the divine through a process of self-purification and spiritual transformation. This path is characterized by the pursuit of love with Allah, which is attainable only by the heart.

Then, Islamic ethics, rooted in the principles of justice (*adl*), compassion (*rahma*), and solidarity (*ukhuwwah*), the ethical dimensions of religious experience. The concept of *ihsan* (excellence) encourages believers to cultivate virtuous qualities and embody moral integrity in their interactions with others. Likewise, the practice of *zakat* (charitable giving) and *sadaqah* (voluntary charity) serves as a means of purifying one's wealth and fostering social justice, thereby enriching the spiritual quality of religious experience (Latief, 2013). The concept of religious experience in Islam by Islamic theology emphasizes the importance of striving for spiritual growth, which can be achieved through acts of charity and philanthropy (Yaran, 2004). While there are challenges in practicing religion and creating an Islamic environment, the rise of religious extremism has led to distorted interpretations of religious experience, leading to violence, intolerance and division within Muslim communities (Hasrin et al., 2023; Yaran, 2004). In addition, the influence of secularism and materialism has marginalized the spiritual dimension of religious experience, contributing to a crisis of faith and identity among contemporary Muslims.

Thus, religious experience in Islam can describe the various aspects of spirituality and the pursuit of a deeper connection with the divine of Allah and *amaliyah*. by the belief in the unity Allah, with different interpretations emphasizing either the transcendence of the divine. The Islamic religious experience is also influenced by the belief in the things that Allah loves and the concept of the final judgement.

3.2. Muslim Philanthropy: Reflecting the Ethics of Behaving

Philanthropy has a rich history, with the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the early Islamic community serving as the primary examples of charitable giving (Hasan, 2022). The concept of “*sadaqah*” in Islam emphasizes the importance of sharing wealth and helping others, which has been a driving force behind Muslim philanthropy throughout history. “*Sadaqah*” is one of the five pillars of Islam, and it encompasses various forms of charitable giving, including almsgiving (*zakat*), voluntary giving (*sadaqa*), and endowments (*waqf*). These practices are grounded in the belief that giving is a means of seeking closeness to God and contributing to the betterment of

society (Latief, 2013; Siddiqui et al., 2019).

The importance of charity (sadaqah) and almsgiving (zakat) as integral components of Islamic ethics, as Allah says in “spend in the way of Allah” (Al-Baqarah:195) and “those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and publicly, they will have their reward with their Lord” (Al-Baqarah:274) emphasizes the value of self-less giving and its spiritual rewards. The philanthropy among Muslims society is a phenomenon that encompasses theological, ethical and sociocultural dimensions (Siddiqui et al., 2019). At its core is the Islamic principle of sadaqah and social finance, which is intricately woven into the fabric of Islamic ethics and spirituality. The Prophetic Hadith abound with stories of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) that exemplify the virtues of generosity, compassion, and social solidarity. Moreover, Hadith traditions narrate the exemplary acts of the Prophet Muhammad in promoting social justice and alleviating the suffering of the marginalized through charitable actions, Al-Qardawi in (Malik, 2016).

Philanthropy is charitable giving that is deeply rooted in the teachings of Islam. It is one of the five pillars of Islam and is practiced through various forms of giving, such as zakat, sadaqah, infaq, and waqf (Hasan, 2022). Philanthropy in Islam, then, is also called Muslim philanthropy, because it uses Islamic social finance instruments. According to Latief (2013) the motivations for Muslim philanthropy are diverse, ranging from spiritual fulfillment to social responsibility. Some Muslims, engage in philanthropy as a means of seeking closeness to God, while others view it as a way to contribute to the betterment of society.

Then, this foundation of Islamic values provides a theological foundation for understanding philanthropy as a manifestation of religious devotion and moral responsibility in Islamic epistemology. From an epistemological, Muslim philanthropy serves as a means of experiential learning and ethical discernment. By engaging in acts of charity and benevolence, individuals acquire firsthand knowledge of human suffering and social inequality, leading to a deeper awareness of their moral responsibilities as stewards of God’s creation. Furthermore, philanthropy fosters empathy, compassion, and solidarity, which are essential virtues for cultivating a spiritually enlightened consciousness (*nafs al-mutma'inna*) in accordance with Islamic teachings (Clarke, 2012; Hasan, 2022; Siddiqui et al., 2019).

But, Muslim philanthropy faces several challenges in the contemporary world, including the need for greater transparency and accountability, as well as the need to adapt to changing social and economic contexts (Kurniawati, 2017; Yuniartin et al., 2022). However, there are also opportunities for Muslim philanthropy to grow and evolve, such as the increasing interest in Islamic finance and the rise of Islamic social entrepreneurship (Fauzia, 2017; Roundy et al., 2017; Suryanto et al., 2020).

3.3. Religious Experience Influences Muslim philanthropy

Religious beliefs and practices play a significant role in shaping the giving behavior of Muslims (Fauzia, 2017). For example, the belief in the reward of giving in the afterlife is a powerful motivator for many Muslims to engage in philanthropic activities (Al-Qaradawi, 2004). Additionally, the practice of 'zakat' (almsgiving) is a mandatory religious obligation for Muslims, which further encourages charitable

giving (Latief, 2013).

Muslim philanthropy constitutes a form of religious praxis that mediates between individual belief and communal belonging within Islamic epistemology. Through acts of giving and receiving, individuals not only fulfill their religious obligations but also participate in the collective endeavor of building a just and compassionate society. The experience of philanthropy engenders a sense of spiritual fulfillment and existential meaning by affirming one's interconnectedness with the Divine and fellow human beings (Kurniawati, 2017; Yuniartin et al., 2022). Muslim philanthropy serves as a practical manifestation of the religious experience within Muslim communities, acting as a bridge between individual faith and collective action aimed at building an Islamic environment. This statement encapsulates the interplay between personal religious conviction (amaliyah activities) and communal aspirations for social transformation and moral cultivation (Clarke, 2012).

However, Muslim philanthropy transcends individual acts of charity to encompass collective efforts aimed at an Islamic environment characterized by justice, compassion, and social solidarity. This collective dimension of philanthropy reflects the communal ethos of Islam, which emphasizes the importance of communal responsibility (*ummatan wasata*) and mutual support (*ta'awun*) in building a righteous society. Through philanthropic initiatives, Muslims come together to address social injustices, alleviate poverty, and promote human welfare, thereby contributing to the creation of an Islamic environment grounded in ethical values and social justice (Malik, 2016; Sobiyanto, 2023).

Moreover, Muslim philanthropy serves as a vehicle for the transmission of Islamic values and teachings across generations, fostering a culture of generosity, compassion, and service to others. By engaging in philanthropic activities, individuals and communities actively participate in the realization of Islamic ideals and principles, reinforcing their religious identity and sense of belonging within the broader Muslim community. In this way, philanthropy becomes a tangible expression of the religious experience, mediating between individual beliefs and collective aspirations for building an Islamic society founded on moral excellence and social welfare (Adzkiya' et al., 2023; Yuniartin et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Muslim philanthropy extends beyond financial contributions to encompass various forms of social engagement and community development initiatives. These may include educational programs, healthcare services, infrastructure development, and humanitarian aid (Fauzia, 2017). By mobilizing resources and expertise towards these endeavors, Muslim philanthropy contributes to the establishment of institutions and structures that uphold Islamic values and promote the common good (Hasan, 2022).

Also, Muslim philanthropy serves as a practical manifestation of the religious experience within Muslim communities, bridging the gap between individual faith and collective action aimed at building an Islamic environment (Yuniartin et al., 2022). Grounded in Islamic teachings and ethical principles, philanthropy reflects to Allah and their commitment to serving humanity (Latief, 2013). By engaging in philanthropic activities, Muslims not only express their religious convictions but also

contribute to the realization of Islamic ideals and the establishment of a just and compassionate society.

3.4. Islamization in Muslim philanthropy

Islamization is a process of deepening commitment to standards of normative Islamic belief, practice and religious identity (Fauzia, 2017). Fauzia's opinion states that Islamization encourages philanthropic practices, but does not necessarily contribute to the development of philanthropy that focuses on social justice.

Islamization in the context of Muslim philanthropy refers to the process of deepening commitment to Islamic beliefs, practices, and religious identity, which in turn encourages the practice of Islamic philanthropy (Roundy et al., 2017). This process is contestation among various groups and individuals, as it involves the interpretation and implementation of Islamic sources, such as the Al-Qur'an and Hadith, in the context of charitable activities.

Islamization is characterized by the use of Islamic sources, the involvement of Islamic organizations, and efforts to implement zakat. It also involves the promotion of more revivalist or conservative interpretations of certain practices and the implementation of zakat as a means of social justice (Hasan, 2022). Modernization, on the other hand, manifests itself in the use of modern forms of organization, modern technologies, and a modern model of rational thinking in the collection, organization, and distribution of charitable giving (Fauzia, 2017). Both Islamization and modernization have become embedded in the recent development of Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia.

The integration of Muslim philanthropy into Islamic epistemology has profound implications for ethical deliberation and social transformation (Siddiqui et al., 2019). By grounding ethical reasoning in lived experiences of generosity and solidarity, Islamic ethics transcends mere legalistic prescriptions and fosters a transformative praxis of social justice and human flourishing. Moreover, Muslim philanthropy serves as a catalyst for community empowerment and grassroots activism, thereby challenging systemic injustices and inequities in the broader society (Clarke, 2012; Hasan, 2022). Islamization also involves the involvement of Islamic organizations in philanthropy (Fauzia, 2017). These organizations play a crucial role in promoting and implementing Islamic philanthropy, as well as providing guidance and support to those engaging in charitable activities.

While the Islamization approach offers valuable insights into the representation of religious experiences in Muslim philanthropy, it also faces challenges and critiques. Critics argue that privileging Islamic perspectives may limit the diversity of religious experiences and overlook the pluralistic nature of philanthropic practices within Muslim communities (Siddiqui et al., 2019). Moreover, tensions may arise between Islamic principles and contemporary ethical norms, raising questions about the adaptability and relevance of religious discourses in addressing social justice issues.

Islamization in Muslim philanthropy has evolved over time, reflecting the changing social, economic, and political contexts in which it operates. It has led to a greater emphasis on the use of Islamic sources, the involvement of Islamic organizations, the implementation of zakat as an individual tax obligation, conservative

interpretations of certain practices, integration with modern practices, increased focus on social justice, and integration with Islamic education (Latief, 2013; Suryanto et al., 2020; Yuniartin et al., 2022). The Islamization perspective is not without its challenges and criticisms. Moreover, disagreements may arise between Islamic principles and contemporary ethical norms and doubts about the relevance of religious teachings in addressing complex social issues. Critics may argue that Islamization in Muslim philanthropy does not prioritize social justice, as it is often associated with individual spiritual growth and the pursuit of closeness to Allah. However, the practice of zakat in Islam is a form of social justice that aims to address inequality and poverty within the Muslim community (Clarke, 2012; Sobiyanto, 2023; Suryanto et al., 2020). However, scholars and experts, through their research, can overcome these challenges and develop an understanding that there is relevance between Muslim religious experience and philanthropy, and that there are strong ties between religion and social attitudes.

4. Conclusion

The representation of religious experience in Muslim philanthropy offers a window into the spiritual dimensions of charitable giving within Islamic traditions. Through an Islamization lens, religious experiences are contextualized within the broader framework of Islamic epistemology and ethics, enriching our understanding of the transformative potential of philanthropy in nurturing spiritual growth and social justice. As scholars and practitioners continue to explore this intersection, it is imperative to remain attentive to the diverse voices and experiences shaping Muslim philanthropy in contemporary contexts.

Moving forward, future research on representing religious experience in Muslim philanthropy should adopt an interdisciplinary approach that bridges Islamic scholarship with insights from sociology and psychology. This approach would facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between religious beliefs, cultural practices, and social dynamics shaping philanthropic experiences among Muslims. Additionally, efforts to promote dialogue and collaboration between religious scholars, philanthropic practitioners, and community stakeholders can foster greater inclusivity and reflexivity in representing religious experiences in Muslim philanthropy.

In addition, it contributes to a broader discussion on the intersection of religion, ethics and social action in contemporary Muslim societies. By foregrounding religious experiences in philanthropy, this research challenges existing secular paradigms and highlights the enduring significance of faith-based approaches to social justice and human development. Moreover, by engaging with Islamic scholarship and religious discourse, this research promotes a deeper understanding of the moral and ethical foundations of philanthropy in the Islamic tradition.

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