

Economicharity, Piety and Inclusiveness in Cyberspace

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ABSTRACT

Today's economy has become a global phenomenon spreading around the world. Philanthropic actions reported in various media have aroused the spirit of solidarity at all levels of society. The rapid development of information technology has also aroused the passion of the community in conducting philanthropic movements. Fundraising is the main charge in promoting the spirit of togetherness, mutual respect, and need for each other. This research seeks to elaborate and explore philanthropic actions carried out by sedekahrombongan.com, dompetdhuafa.com, kitabisa.com. This type of research is qualitative, conducted with virtual ethnographic models. The three philanthropic Institutions above reveal that the internet can be a breakthrough model for promoting its economy globally. On the other hand, the three philanthropic institutions above have given awareness space to the comprehensive community to promote humanitarian attitudes, solidarity to always help each other towards God's creation.

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Introduction

The idea of philanthropy becomes a serious discourse along with the discovery of the concept of Civil Society because its emergence is mainly related to the independence of the Civil Society itself (Fauzia, 2016). The term 'Philanthropy' comes from Greek, Philos (Love), and Anthros (Human), so that literally, philanthropy is a conceptualization of the practice of giving, services, and associations voluntarily to help others in need as an expression of love (Klein, 2016). This term also refers to the Western experience in the seventeenth century when countries and individuals began to feel responsible for caring for the weak. Although different in concept and practice, as Ilchman argues, philanthropic traditions have been known in every human culture throughout history (Ilchman et al., 2006).

Economic inequality, in which the bourgeoisie controls the means of production, creates a deep

financial gap between the rich and the poor. This wealth inequality is caused by the greed of the economic system that sides with the owners of capital. It leads to misery for the lower classes. As a result, the power of a handful of conglomerates becomes the dominant economic force in particular social structures (Amelia Fauzia, 2016). However, the public has not fully realised the importance of philanthropy as an instrument to encourage social change. Payton & Moody (2008) even illustrated that philanthropy is as critical as law and medicine. Philanthropy represents the collective action of society. It is also an essential tool in collaborative efforts to solve problems in people's lives, such as poverty alleviation, the realization of public welfare, the embodiment of social justice, and the strengthening of democracy. The use of digital technology is increasingly massive and growing, marked by the rise of online platforms in financial services.

Interestingly, outside the fintech service trend, online community fundraising activities are secretly sprouting. Awareness of the emergence of the power of online platforms for various activities was able to become an alternative philanthropic activity (Latief, 2010). Even the use of the platform is done to attract more donors and ideally used to monitor and evaluate the program itself (Hewa et al., 2005). Indonesia is known as one of the countries with the fastest technological "literacy" in the world. Technology savvy and mobile-first users are styles accepted by Indonesia by global research institutions and economic analysts. Research conducted by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in October 2016 said that internet users reached 132.7 million, or equivalent to 51.7 per cent of the population. Another fact, the number of cell phone users is predicted to penetrate 173 million this year. About 98 per cent of Indonesians have one social media account, and 80 million Facebook users from Indonesia, the fourth largest globally.

This paper focuses on a discussion of the philanthropic movement effort that is motivated by the global situation. There are three institutions, namely *sedekahrombongan.com*, *dhompetchuaafa.com*, and *Kitabisa.com*, that use the internet to involve the public in the philanthropic movement (Hemer, 2011). With the rapid development of technology, fundraising and social activity promotions will be even better (Leichtman, 2018). The community is invited to contribute funds and distribute them to people. Also, this paper observes the social piety towards fellow human beings. Any religion teaches virtue. Therefore, it is essential to explain that the internet presence can quickly and indefinitely change religious values. Thus, religion becomes a role model in the virtual world (Hilmy, 2010).

Discussion

Philanthropy: A New Trend of Altruism

Philanthropy is defined as personal voluntary actions driven by a tendency to uphold public benefit (Hewa et al., 2005), voluntary acts for general use (Payton & Moody, 2008). Philanthropy is also interpreted as both material and non-material contributions to support a social activity

without retribution for its giver (Anheier, 2005). The definition above shows that the general-purpose underlying philanthropy is love manifested in solidarity among humans (Sulek, 2010). Others, Philanthropy is defined as personal voluntary actions driven by a tendency to uphold public benefit (Hewa et al., 2005) or voluntary acts for public benefit (Klein, 2016). In Islam, philanthropy is manifested in the form of *zakat*, *infaq*, alms, and endowments. It has a strategic position to reflect the existence of a balance point in implementing Islamic teachings. Philanthropy can be seen conceptually and practically, namely between faith and good deeds, prayer and *zakat*, the world and the hereafter, as well as reflected in the prayer itself, which is preceded by *Takbir*, raising both hands and ending with greetings to look right and left to care to others (A Fauzia, 2008).

To introduce the concept of altruism, *dompetdhuafa.com*, as the pioneer of the first philanthropic institution in Indonesia, utilizes the internet as a medium to spread charitable activities to the community. *Dompot Dhuafa* was founded in 1993 by several journalists who worked in the *Republika* General Daily, a newspaper founded by activists who are members of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectual Association (ICMI). Appearing as an Islamic newspaper, *Dompot Dhuafa* provides a new colour for the mass media field in Indonesia, which are considered less representative of Islam. In its age of two decades (1993-2013), *Dompot Dhuafa* developed into a respected *amil zakat* institution and appeared as a model of modern Islamic philanthropic institutions in Indonesia. *Dompot Dhuafa* has very diverse programs. These programs are managed dynamically and professionally, covering the social, economic, health and education fields. *Dompot Dhuafa* operates various institutions as philanthropic institutions, funding small businesses and empowering farmers and fishermen (Latief, 2013).

Altruism as an idea to prioritize happiness, help, serve, and sacrifice for others moves into an activity in the form of philanthropy. In two decades, Islamic Altruism in the form of philanthropic movement in Indonesia showed significant development. Therefore, the development of Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia cannot be separated from the enthusiasm of the Indonesian Muslim middle class to be involved in the social and political life of their country (Fauzia, 2008).

The dynamics of philanthropy move from traditional mechanisms to philanthropy for social justice. This understanding place philanthropy as a medium to eliminate social injustice rooted in poverty and social inequality. Philanthropy bridges the gap between the rich and the poor by mobilizing the community's potential (people). In social justice philanthropy, philanthropic activities are carried out collectively with social movement organizations (Fuadi, 2012). Batson (2011) explains several factors that affect altruism, one of which is empathy. Altruism is closely related to the heart. There is a relationship between the magnitude of compassion and the tendency to help. Empathy is related to the ability of individuals to express their emotions. Therefore one's compassion can be measured through insights, feelings, emotional expressions, and the ability to

understand the roles of other individuals (Latief, 2013).

Social Piety Through Online

The use of the internet in the digital era has become a necessity. Not just to communicate, with the internet, anyone can build a cyber world. They are connected in online activities. Information exchange has become faster, leading to new internet-based movements (Joyce et al., 2010) because people are connected through communication mediated by computers (*Computer-Mediated Communication*). Connected individuals with internet access bring up online activities. With this kind of technological sophistication, the world has evolved (Ilchman, 2006). Many parties use today's internet technology as an alternative in facilitating all human activities so that humans automatically have entered a phase of life in cybersociety. Croteau & David (2007) explained that multimedia or cyber society is a term in the development of information technology, making some people depend on the facilities provided by the internet.

The concept of crowdfunding makes use of technology and social construction as a basis. The use of technology is undoubtedly influenced by public demand for easy and robust technology to use (Batson, 2011). As easy as now someone to donate to someone else who needs help. For example, the donor is only enough to open the crowdfunding site and then distribute the funds, according to the campaign (program) that he wants. Using perspective from Larkin (2002), the technology state is like science, namely as a social construction; its trajectory depends on many social factors and relationships between social groups. Therefore crowdfunding, as I call it e-philanthropy, is a form of the social construction of technology. Social structure in technology allegedly emerged when the use of the internet was mushrooming. The evolution of inter-communication internet usage means the computer becomes a medium of democratization that can be understood in terms of the social construction of technology where development technology is not linear (Flew, 2007).

Not surprisingly, social activism marked by the practice of charity is often identified with charity or alms. Although the charity tradition can have strong cultural roots in all civilizations, religious inspiration seems to be a dominant factor in the generosity tradition (Fuadi, 2012). Several studies have shown that religious traditions have different nomenclatures, motivations, and theological justifications, but they lead to an obligation to adorn virtue and express piety (Debasa & Sabra, 2003). Almost all religious dogmas are identical to teachings that are committed to helping the weak and poor. Borrowing Bourdieu (1977) model of reading, gift or gift-giving requires a relationship formation, which leads to the gift exchange or counter-gift formation, both in the context of reciprocation, symbolism, and economy. In such a context, ideological, religious, and political contestation of the practice of generosity can occur in the public sphere.

What's quite interesting to elaborate further is how religion interprets and projects concepts of

virtue in the public sphere. The idea of individual piety from a religious adherent can be launched to realize the public and the common good welfare. The reason is the increasingly plural public sphere, and the problems faced by society are also increasingly complex (Latief, 2013). Moreover, the practice of giving cannot be separated from the reciprocal relationship between the giver (benefactor) and the one receiving (receiver). This reciprocal relationship often leads to the formation of a patronage relationship between the giver and receiver. The meaning of piety itself is more to the strategy of building harmonious relations with fellow human beings without having to leave the Muslim identity itself (Saidurrahman, 2013). The practice of social piety arises for two main reasons, namely the stigmatization of normativism that still exists in diversity and the continuing exclusivity of attitudes towards experiences of religious values that are too extreme. This fact makes Islam not adaptive in the dynamics of the times. Various kinds of discourse regarding social piety to shape an ideal Muslim society has been carried out by multiple experts (Hilmy, 2010).

It is recognized that the Islamic philanthropic movement in general still faces several challenges and opportunities at the global, national, and local levels. At the global level, the insistence of the international community to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which is to eradicate world poverty by half by 2025, seems difficult to realize if national and global politics do not provide better movement for the poor to access the fulfilment of their lives equally (Latief, 2010). It is commonly known, poverty in Indonesia is a longstanding political fruit of poverty. Poor people not because of themselves who cause poverty, but there is a political factor of impoverishment by the authorities in partnership with the capitalist class (Wojciechowski, 2009). Philanthropic activities have so rapidly fertilized the growth of various donor agencies and charities. The growth pattern of donor institutions standing outside the mosque is interesting to examine, that religious values are now a general value (Nurdin, 2006).

The amount of funds raised from various circles shows that concern for others has now been increasing. The high number of such problems has similarities with the emergence of social piety movements amid a stir. The relationship of social piety is a form of the antithesis of spiritual purity that emphasizes diligent patterns of worship such as Hajj, Umrah, etcetera. But it tends to be opposed to its social practices. Social piety is also part of an applied defining Islamic religious worship in a contemporary context (Azra, 2005). The meaning of social piety itself is more of a strategy of building harmonious relationships with other human beings without having to abandon the identity of Muslims themselves. Social piety arises because of the exclusive practice of Islamic values that are too esoteric to make Islam nonadaptive in the time dynamic development (PIRAC, 2002).

Founder Sedekah Rombongan Saptuari Sugiharto explained his movement began with his

penchant for visiting orphanages. He then took the initiative to invite friends through the web and Twitter. Receiving an extraordinary response, Saptuari launched the Twitter account @SRBergerak on June 9, 2011. Until now, Sedekah Rombongan has channelled Rp 16.9 billion in three years (Interview with Saptuari, 2019). Sedekah Rombongan recipients begin to be pursued based on priority. They are children with disabilities in orphanages, abandoned babies, orphanages, elderly widows of poor people, sick people who cannot afford medical treatment, orphan and underprivileged school fees, boarding schools that lack funding for construction, mosque construction, and worship needs (Interview with Saptuari, 2019).

Sedekah Rombongan has a vision in the form of an explanation of his identity. "This is alms on the streets, and this is about drugs that have not been purchased, rice and side dishes that have not been paid for. "About milk and baby food that runs out tomorrow, also school fees are still pending," the young businessman from Yogyakarta explained. Stuart said that the movement was different from *amil zakat* institutions because the distribution was more agile and immediately moved once alms were distributed. Volunteers who joined the Sedekah Rombongan did not receive payment (Interview with Saptuari, 2019).

From the statements above, Sedekah Rombongan tries to describe piety as social piety contributing to habituation growth, called fortification. The fortification aims are to establish equality in a society that erodes class culture at the level of society itself. In this context, the community will merge into a whole unity, united based on humanity and the respect of religious values (Berger, 2006). The estuary is on inclusivity for kindness towards others, regardless of social status, ethnicity, or religion. At the same time, human egocentrism will be shifted to caring to always pay attention to human attitudes (Ibrahim, 2002).

Generosity & Religious Inclusiveness in Cyberspace

Discourse on religion and development is a discourse that has long existed in the discussion of social sciences. It can be said that rationality is one of the pillars of development born of religious dialectics, as Max Weber stated in his essay entitled *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 2005). From the reading can be observed that there is no belief, or it is not possible to involve religious values that deal with ethical and moral issues during the development efforts because of its often-contradictory nature with aspects of rationality (Haynes, 2007). It is this complexity that religious-based organizations or institutions often face being involved in the development plan. On the one hand, the dynamics of modern era development take place in a rapid and profound transformation in changing the behaviour of traditional peoples to move into new civilizations according to modernity standards (Djakfar, 2007).

Seeing the conditions in Indonesian society, whose daily life is inseparable from religious rituals, certainly forms a pattern of interaction that emphasises the dynamics of religiosity, such as

Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Religion has a vital role in supporting sustainable development in Indonesia (F. & Muzdalifa, 2008). In that context, that does not mean that people's solidarity cannot be expected for more constructive purposes. It can also use similar contexts to build a more protagonist nuance, such as charitable purposes as one of the direct manifestations of people's sense of community. As a social activity, generosity derived from religious ethics became the choice of religious institutions as an idea that was initially the teaching of religious reform because some spiritual understanding emphasizes worship called traditional virtues (Cascione, 2003). In the context of philanthropy in general, regardless of religion, the parties involved have their respective roles and responsibilities (Bartkowski, 2003). Institutions must pay attention to who is entitled to receive these funds for accountability. Institutions must also build relationships between recipients and funders and reformulate the management of the funds they receive so that institutional accountability and trust from the community can increase (Ellen, 2006).

A prosperous life is the dream of society. Religion is taught to disseminate justice and provide opportunities for a better standard of living. Thus, conditions that indicate the low living standard existence are the main target of improvement efforts to realize the prosperous state. The condition of poverty with various dimensions and implications is a form of a social problem that describes the circumstance of low welfare (Abu Bakar etc., 2006). In a digital space controlled by electronic speed, human existence undergoes a fundamental change from the shape of a body moving in space to a body that remains in place and can only absorb any information through electronic simulations (Harvey, 2020). In the theory of Religious-Social Shaping of Technology introduced by Heidi Campbell in his book *When Religion Meets New Media* (2010), it is explained that the impact of the digital era on people's religious ways, among which the most felt is the fading of affiliation to religious institutions, shifting of religious authority, strengthening of individualism, and a change from pluralism to tribalism.

Dompot Dhuafa has reached communities in 34 provinces and 24 countries through five-pillar programs, namely education, health, economy, social, propaganda, and culture, with beneficiaries reaching 2.47 million people (Interview with Dompot Dhuafa, 2019). Collaboration and synergy continue to be built and strengthened to expand benefits and support the government's sustainable development goals (SDG). The pace of technology that is increasingly sophisticated helped bring about changes in donor demographics. In 2019, the trend with electronic payment systems will be even more significant, which will impact donation system trends. In social programs, there are 1,922,898 beneficiaries, 362,654 people in health programs, 94,660 economics, education programs (83,683 people), cultural and da'wah programs (11,133 beneficiaries) (Interview with Dompot Dhuafa, 2019).

Kitabisa, who specializes in acting in the social enterprise field (Mair & Marti, 2006: 36-44), is

quite aware that innovation is needed to reach users who also act as candidates donors to succeed in running crowdfunding practices. Therefore, Kitabisa dynamically began setting up a website in 2013, Android operating system application devices in 2017, and applications in iOS devices in 2019. Significant donation development shows the more trustworthy form of donors on the Kitabisa website. First, there was to make Kitabisa continued to innovate to be closer to the user through an application that is more easily accessed by users daily.

Based on the commercial background or the purpose of the project, Kitabisa application is included in not-for-profit crowdfunding because the projects in it founded for the objectives relating to various social interests, such as assistance humanity, health, education, facilities, and infrastructure, the environment and animals (Okpara & Halkias, 2011). At this stage, digital space must be used to spread universal humanitarian teachings, so that philanthropic activities initiated by Dompot Dhuafa and Kitabisa can trigger human inclusiveness whose benefits can be felt by the extensive community without relying on specific identities. Of course, this further reinforces the inclusiveness values of better religious teachings, namely promoting peace and harmony in life with fellow God's creatures.

Conclusion

The Internet for philanthropic activities is not only related to cyberspace but also refers to the empirical world. The collective movement of the actors involved in philanthropic activities makes it included in the mass society category. However, their virtual interactions lead these actors to commit a series of public piety and are intensively involved in the network. Communities in the philanthropic movement are mass-based virtual communities as well as network-based communities. These actors do not stop as virtual communities, but they actively and creatively bridge social and humanitarian activities. Religious mediation has entered a new era, where religion has become a medium, converts profane values into virtual interactions, teaches attitudes of egalitarianism and humanity. Making others happy in the real world has been carried over to the virtual world. With this, the social logic of society has started to shift into an imaginative area but still maintains positivistic values that are in line with humanity.

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