



Philanthropy in *Majelis Taklim* as Contesting Space: Between Women's Subjectivities and Islamist Movement in Surakarta

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Abstract

This paper examines the response of the women's *majelis taklim* in Surakarta to the Islamist movement, through philanthropic activities. Using qualitative research methods, this article collects data by interview the congregations and the administrators of three *majelis taklim*-Al Husna, Humaira, and Da'wah Squad. I argues that *majelis taklim* is a space to express women's subjectivities and pieties. This paper show that there are different patterns of philanthropic activities at the group and individual level. At the group (*majelis*) level, especially at Al Husna, there is a potential for expansion of the Islamist movement proven by their support of the Islamist group's philanthropy. Da'wah Squad and Humaira show a different response in limiting Islamism by organizing independent and creative philanthropy that targets wider beneficiaries. At the individual level, some administrators and congregations of the three *majelis taklim* have shown their potential for narrowing the Islamist movement with different variations of philanthropy. This research contributes to presenting the women's philanthropy within women's piety movement in the context of emerging Islamism in Surakarta.

Keywords:

Women, Majelis Taklim, Philanthropy, Islamist Movement

Abstrak

Tulisan ini mengkaji respons majelis taklim perempuan di Surakarta terhadap gerakan islamis, melalui kegiatan filantropi. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif, artikel ini mengumpulkan data dengan mewawancarai jamaah dan pengurus dari tiga majelis taklim-Al Husna, Humaira, dan Dakwah Squa'ad. Saya berpendapat bahwa majelis taklim

adalah ruang untuk mengekspresikan subjektivitas dan kesalehan perempuan. Tulisan ini menunjukkan adanya pola filantropi yang berbeda di tingkat kelompok dan individu. Di level kelompok (majelis), khususnya di Al Husna, ada potensi ekspansi gerakan Islam yang dibuktikan dengan dukungan mereka terhadap filantropi yang dilakukan oleh kelompok islamis. Da'wah Squad dan Humaira menunjukkan respon berbeda dalam membatasi islamisme dengan menyelenggarakan filantropi mandiri dan kreatif yang menysasar penerima manfaat yang lebih luas. Di level individu, beberapa pengurus dan jemaah dari ketiga majelis tersebut telah menunjukkan potensinya untuk mempersempit gerakan Islam dengan variasi filantropi yang berbeda. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam menghadirkan filantropi perempuan dalam gerakan kesalehan perempuan dalam konteks kemunculan islamisme di Surakarta.

Kata kunci:

Perempuan, Majelis taklim, Filantropi, Islamisme.

Introduction

In Indonesia, Islamic philanthropy has been run by the two largest community organizations, Nahdatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. The two organizations formed a philanthropic institution that deals with zakat, *wakaf*, and alms issues, namely the Lembaga Amil Zakat Infaq dan Sadaqoh Nahdatul Ulama (LAZISNU, Amil Zakat Infaq, and Sadaqoh Nahdatul Ulama Institutions) and the Lembaga Amil Zakat Infaq dan Sadaqoh Muhammadiyah (LAZISMU, Amil Zakat Infaq, and Sadaqoh Nahdatul Ulama Institutions). However, the two philanthropic institutions are still not sufficient to accommodate the involvement of the muslim community at large. This inadequate philanthropy is due to several things such as (1) inadequate management, (2) being limited institutional capacity, (3) competition between NU and Muhammadiyah at the grassroots level, (4) low awareness of the charity, (5) limited only to the lower class (Final Research Report CRCS 2021). Another factor is that not all people affiliated with NU and Muhammadiyah. Some of them from Salafi groups or non-affiliates groups where they also have strong networks. In addition, philanthropy is also a source of strength to demonstrate organization's role and authority in the public sphere (Williams 2003; Clark 2004; MacIndoe 2021)

In the last decade, Muslim women have begun to pioneer philanthropic activities (Nisa 2019; Johnson 2017; Atia 2013; Latief 2017; Bulck 2018). Their role has progressed from a domestic role and the non-profit sector to an independent social role. The power of women's empathy is believed to be greater than men. Women spend more of their income to seek the best facilities for their children and families especially for their food, health, nutrition, and welfare (Abraham 2010). Along with the opening of space and freedom for women, the power of women's empathy is not only in the domestic sphere (family) but also extends to the realm of the general public. One example is the philanthropic activities carried out by women in *majelis taklim* in Surakarta. They are focused on organizing recitation and have high initiative and awareness to be actively involved in philanthropic activities.

Surakarta is known as one of the places for the proliferation of Islamist groups. The existence of them has been studied by scholars, such as Wildan who studied the Islamism movement at Pondok Ngruki, Surakarta which was pioneered by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Abdullah Sungkar (Wildan 2013a; 2013b), the movement carried out by Jama'ah Gumuk, and FPIS (Wildan 2018). The other research also shows that Surakarta, has become the center of the spread and development of radical Islamist groups that involved in some politic-action in various ways, and became stronger in the Post-Reform (Hasan & Ajudin 2019; Ahyar 2019; Zulfadli 2019; Ichwan 2019).

While, the previous research about women piety movement and philanthropy was conducted by Mona Atia (2013) who sees the phenomenon of Islamism in Egypt as "neoliberal piety". The term represents the piety movement in Arabia, where there is a close relationship between market orientation and faith. Through charity activities, Atia would like to understand the political economy order between the state and individuals. The relationship between piety and charity is also explained

by Nisa, (2019). She discusses one of the *hijrah* artists in Indonesia, Peggy Melati Sukma, who influences philanthropic activities in Indonesia. Apart from being the founder of a philanthropic organization, she also carries out religious activities to motivate young Indonesian Muslim women to move in humanity. Her philanthropy role, particularly helping Palestine and Syria, has inspired Indonesian Muslims to develop philanthropy in Indonesia. Campanella (2020) also said that “From an economic perspective, celebrity involvement in humanitarian and environmental activism helps to widen and qualify the media exposure they enjoy over the course of their careers”.

In line with Nisa’s research (2019), Latief (2013) states that the spirit of Islamic solidarity drives philanthropic institutions, fundraising actions, and zakat institutions in Indonesia. Latief (2017) examined the *Dompot Peduli Amal* case managed by Daarut Tauhid (DT) as part of the re-islamization of middle-class Muslim families in Indonesia. Latief argues that philanthropic activities are to improve the welfare of the rural poor that is negotiated with economic activities in daily life. While, this research would like to see the various expressions of women’s pieties and subjectivities of the *majelis taklim*’s philanthropic activities in Surakarta.

Women in *majelis taklim* have a good management system in collaboration with national philanthropic agencies such as Program Pembibitan Penghafal Al-Quran (PPPA, Daarul Qur’an Memorization Nursery Program), Aksi Cepat Tanggap (ACT), Darut Tauhid (DT) Peduli, and One Care. Moreover, they grew more assertive when they carried out activities with other *majelis taklim* who joined the Dakwah Berjamaah Solo Raya (Dakwah Congregation of Solo Raya). However, at the group-level, the distribution of philanthropy in *majelis taklim* cannot be separated from Islamist groups such as Forum Komunikasi Aktivis Masjid (FKAM, Mosque Activist Communication Forum) and Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII, Indonesian Islamic Dakwah Council), because Islamist

groups need their help to accommodate their activities. Besides, at the individual level they also have philanthropic initiatives and activities that do not involve Islamist groups.

Studies on women's philanthropy are essential to show the role of women in philanthropic activities. I agree with Latief (2017) that philanthropy is not just a material giving activity. Moreover, women's philanthropy is also related to awareness, support, commitment, dedication, women's participation in solving poverty problems, especially those that impact women and children as a public issue. Women's philanthropy is a form of movement managed by women, which is used to empower women in the wider context of society (Williams 2003).

This study uses a qualitative research method where data is obtained from interviews with the administrators and congregations of Al Husna, Humaira, and Da'wah Squad. In addition, the author also collects data on philanthropy through social media, especially Instagram. Social media not only functions as a documentation space for philanthropic programs and *dakwah* but also as an effort to attract and approach donors (Lengauer 2018; Hew 2018; Kailani and Slama 2019; Husein and Slama 2018). The three *majelis taklim* were chosen for three reasons: 1) they were founded by women, 2) most of the members are women, and 3) the three *majelis taklim* held philanthropic activities. Tibi (2016) said that Islamism is "an ideology that connects *din* (religion) and *daulah* (state) in a sharia-based political order". The Islamist build the understanding that Islam is *din-wa-daulah* which means a religion that is united with the state structure. The women in the *majelis taklim* in Surakarta show a different character from the Islamism, because they are more focus on increasing piety rather than setting a political agenda. They are new actors who are not members of the Islamist group. They formed a *majelis taklim* as an attempt to express their pieties.

This research wants to determine women's motivation to carry out these activities, where the funds are distributed, and what organizations are used as partners. Interestingly, these philanthropic actors do not come from Islamist groups, but sometimes they work with Islamist organizations. How do the women in the *majelis taklim* respond Islamist movement through philanthropy? I argue that philanthropy is a form of expression of piety and a response by women in the *majelis taklim* on the Islamist movement, which has implications for expanding or narrowing the Islamist movement in Surakarta.

Philanthropy in *Majelis Taklim*

In Surakarta, there are more than twenty *majelis taklim* founded by women. Most of them, apart from holding recitations, also organize philanthropic activities including Al Husna, Humaira and the Da'wah Squad. In philanthropic activities, each *majelis taklim* have their goals. Al Husna's goal in organizing philanthropic activities is to open opportunities for members to channel their assets to help people in need. Aida Hanura (The Chairman of Al Husna) said "Just to give an opportunity to those who have the ability to have wealth and would like to distribute it. We just help them. Help people who channel their wealth and to hone their empathy" (Interview with Aida Hanura (54 years old), Surakarta, April, 2021). In some cases, the urge to give alms is driven by the role of an inspiring motivator such as Yusuf Mansur, Ippho Santosa, Ary Ginanjar, Agus Pramono (Kailani 2021). In the *majelis taklim*, a motivator was replaced by the *majelis taklim's* administrators, philanthropic agent, and the other members.

The goals of Al Husna above show that philanthropy does not depend on building a community or providing benefits to developing the program in the *majelis taklim* itself, but more focus on shaping the character of its members. Philanthropy becomes a space for "building values and

piety” such as “empathy” and “sharing the wealth” (generosity). These values are part of being a pious Muslim (Mahmood 2005). From the motivation *majelis taklim* above, Al Husna would like to see how much their role is needed and impact on society. Al Husna agreed when they asked for help from philanthropic institutions such as ACT, FKAM, and Dewan Dakwah Jawa Tengah (DDJT, Central Java Dakwah Council) to open donations to the congregation since Al Husna felt needed by them. This collaboration can strengthen the role of women in philanthropic activities. On the other hand, without their full conscience, this cooperation paved the way for Islamist groups to expand their networks.

The DDJT is a branch of the DDII which is still active and growing, covering the social, political, and economic fields. DDII is a *dakwah* organization of the former Masumi Party such as PII (Indonesian Islamic Students) and GPI (Islamic Youth Movement) led by Mohammad Natsir, the former head of the Masyumi. DDJT and FKAM have philanthropic institutions, namely LAZNAS *Dewan Dakwah Jawa Tengah* and FKAM *BaitulMal*. Both of them focus on the cadre of *da'i* (preacher) in Indonesia with the help of philanthropic funds. Meanwhile, ACT is a non-profit philanthropic agency in Indonesia that is engaged in social and humanitarian activities, both within the scope of local Muslim and international Muslim. ACT often conducts transnational philanthropic relationships such as aid for Palestine and Syria and global *Qurban* (Setiawan, Saputra, and Wahyudi 2020). The question is why did Al Husna want to collaborate with them?

I argue that the collaboration between Al Husna and those organization was because, first, Al Husna used the *majelis taklim* to play its social role and subjectivities. This relationship is a form of “reciprocity” that benefits both parties-networking with DDII, ACT, and FKAM open opportunities for Al Husna to express piety by building empathy. At the same time, DDII, ACT, and FKAM found partners to hold charity and philanthropic activities to support their program. Al Husna tries to

“accommodate” financial assistance for the agents they work with (see Saunders and Hastings 2022). Aida, the head of Al Husna said:

If they share activities with us, such as needing funds for wells for clean water sources, helping earthquake victims..So there is one administrator who has an ACT number, so if there is a program they contact us and then we share it in the group and those who want to donate are on the list....usually what we often share is from DDII and ACT. If the DDII builds wells, for *da'i* in the interior, build water sources in water-scarce areas. There are preachers from DDII who need, for example, their children for surgery, which they share with us. Usually the fees are impromptu (Interview with Aida, July 2021).

Second, based on the Aida's statement above, the collaboration was happened because the approach's success and the ease of building networks carried out by philanthropic agents (DDII, FKAM, ACT) with *majelis taklim*. A philanthropic agent such as DDII, FKAM and ACT has the initiative to contact Al Husna's administrator. Donations are made through posts on Instagram and the Al Husna's WhatsApp group. The philanthropic agents could easily enter the realm of *majelis taklim*, considering that several preachers invited to Al Husna joined in it. Clark calls this kind of relationship a “friendship network” where a community can collaborate with other communities based on a circle of friends (Clark 2004). They expand their network horizontally with a homogeneous community (Kamalkhani 2020; Abdullahi 2019).

Al Husna's cooperative relationship with several philanthropic agents shows that Al Husna's interest in helping them is based on “awareness of empathy” to alleviate other people's problems. This has nothing to do with his support for the ideology of Islamism but rather on their subjectivities to express their awareness of humanitarian assistance. This goal can be seen from the assistance provided to them for general humanitarian problems, such as building wells, clean water, and earthquake

victims. Meanwhile, philanthropic agencies such as FKAM, ACT, and DDII utilize the *majelis taklim* as a community at the grassroots level, to accommodate their programs. ACT has professional management and the ability to network well by focusing on distributing charities to empower the aggrieved parties (Nisa 2019).

While Humaira's philanthropic activities aim to "introduce Islam, to *syiar* Islam". Iin (The Vice Chairman of Humaira) explained further about *syiar* Islam:

Syiar Islam that I mean, for example, is when we distribute necessities, it is for those around the mosque, pedicab drivers, sweepers or those who clean the streets, we give the women who sell street food. Free medical treatment is also carried out around the mosque for pedicab drivers and all kinds of things. The intention is that when they study, later they are used to coming to the mosque, maybe praying or attending the recitation, so we attract people around who may still be afraid to go to the mosque or have not been to the mosque, so they can go to the mosque first even though at that time we started with activities social (Interview with Iin, Juni 2021).

From Iin's statement, Humaira's goal to carry out philanthropic activities is the *syiar* Islam which can be interpreted as an "invitation" to introduce Islam and draw closer to Allah. Through philanthropy programs, Humaira aims to attract public sympathy to go to the mosque and participate in the recitation so that philanthropy has become part of Humaira's *dakwah*. Their motivation is based on moving together to seek Allah's pleasure. Iin said that the task of being a caretaker is an expensive job. This task is the same as "working with God". They are "employees of Allah" to help spread Islam (Interview with Iin Juni 2021). Humaira try to hold the people and communities around him to walk together with the same goal. Therefore, Humaira collaborated with philanthropic agents such as the ACT, PPPA Darul Quran, One Care, and DT Peduli to distribute philanthropic funds.

Humaira collaborates with NGOs and national philanthropic organizations rather than local philanthropic agents as did Al Husna. It shows Humaira's more openness to go public, and accommodating modernization. One Care is a non-governmental organization that builds awareness and solutions to human problems. One Care's vision is to build awareness and become a humanitarian problem. One Care has two main programs, namely the distribution of a million Qurans, such as distributing Al Quran in TPA/ Mosques in need and Gaza water stations, namely making water wells for Gaza residents. Their other programs are assistance for victims affected by natural disasters or humanitarian crises, improving the quality of nutrition and education (onecare.id).

The goal of the social program of Da'wah Squad is "spreading benefits". It is part of Da'wah Squad's tagline, namely sharing knowledge and sharing benefits. It is implied by carrying out social activities such as social services to lodges, providing assistance for the COVID-19 pandemic, sharing necessities for orphans, *dhua'fa* and *iftar* aid, and distributing clean water (Interview with Ustadz Aziz (Da'wah Squad's Advisor) December 2020).

Retno, the chairman of Da'wah Squad, said that this social activity can be used to establish friendship and strengthen *ukhuwah* with Muslim brothers. In addition, charity activities also aim to solve people's problems such as Christianity, poverty or humanitarian conflicts. This goal was then implemented in the philanthropic programs of the Da'wah Squad in collaboration with Islamic boarding schools, hospitals, village heads, and community organizations. *Majelis Taklim* Da'wah Squad also collaborates with philanthropic agencies such as Warung Sedekah Sumringah and ACT (Interview with Retno Phalupie (The Chairman of Da'wah Squad), Surakarta, June, 2021).

This collaboration with ACT happened because ACT contacted the Da'wah Squad management to collaborate. Donations that have

been made by the Da'wah Squad for the ACT are clean water donations. Meanwhile, collaboration with Warung Sedekah Sumringah was carried out by submitting assistance from the Da'wah Squad to Warung Sedekah Sumringah. Warung Sedekah Sumringah is a kind community from Sukoharjo that has activities to share food three times a week. It offers three programs, namely sincere alms targeted at schools and colleges, paid alms with junk (used goods) and full free alms for Friday blessings (Fitusia 2019). The Da'wah Squad needs help from it because they need food assistance for the residents of the orphanage and the consumption of the recitation cogregation after the study. The request for assistance is replaced by the Da'wah Squad with *infaq*, but it is often also done for free Inter (Interview with Retno Phalupie (The Chairman of Da'wah Squad), June, 2021).

A Contesting Space: Philanthropic Distribution at the Individual and Group Level

Al Husna

The routine activity carried out by Al Husna is independent philanthropy, which is to open opportunities for donors to help Islamic boarding schools. Currently, there are 25-30 Al Husna's members who are regular donors of Al Husna. Funds from these donors were donated to the preachers' lodges invited by Al Husna every month, carried out in rotation (Interview with Aida Hanura, April 2021). This philanthropy orientation is related to a friendship network, so philanthropy is channeled to the closest network with Al Husna. Al Husna's social activities are carried out for outsiders and members within Al Husna itself. The administrators held its *infaq* activities outside of the mobile box used to visit sick relatives, to attend weddings. Meanwhile, the *infaq* funds from the portable box are used to pay the invited preachers (Interview with Aida Hanura, April

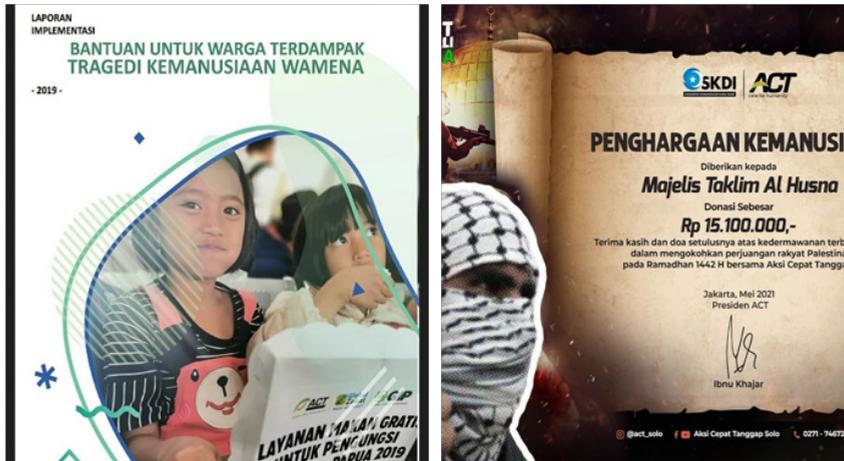
2021). Borrowing Sarah's term "everyday piety" or a productive action in everyday activities can construct a person's piety identity. This practice can manifest in clothes, places of work, and the ways of worshipping (Tobin 2016; Sunier 2018; Farrell 2019).

Al Husna carried out several incidental philanthropic activities in collaboration with philanthropic agencies such as the ACT, FKAM, and DDJT. The accommodation was carried out when DDJT or FKAM asked Al Husna for help. Activities carried out include donations for DDJT preachers affected by COVID-19, participation in ZISWAF (*Zakat, Infaq Shodaqoh*, and *Wakaf*), and clean water for South Borneo program of Laznas DDJT, assistance for *Ulama* deliberation activities and community leaders of the DDJT. Besides, Al Husna also helps FKAM preachers affected by COVID-19 through *BaitulMal* FKAM. Recently Al Husna distributed *qurban* through FKAM. This collaboration shows that at the group level of the philanthropic of Al Husna cannot be separated from the Islamism movement by accommodating their programs.

However, not all philanthropy carried out by Al Husna is affiliated with the Islamist group. At the individual level, both administrators and members often share open donations to other non-ideological institutions in need in the Al Husna WhatsApp group. They are also channeled not only to Islamic institutions but also to the society in general. Al Husna's management also accommodates open donations shared by the congregation in the WA group, such as helping to collect funds from the congregation. For example, on June 9, 2021, one congregation shared aid for child medical expenses. Then, the management of Al Husna helped raise funds through the account of one of the administrators of Al Husna.

The various programs above show variations in the subjectivity of the *majelis taklim* at the group and individual levels. At the group level, most of Al Husna's philanthropic activities are distributed to accommodate Islamist groups such as FKAM and DDII. Meanwhile, activities that

collaborate with ACT are more generally distributed, not only for Islamic activities but also humanitarian activities such as aid for COVID-19, victims of the Wamena and Palestinian conflicts.



Picture 1. Donation of Al Husna for victims of residents affected by the human tragedy in Wamena (Instagram @alhusna0909) and donation for Palestine (Instagram @alhusna0909)

This Al Husna donation activity shared via Instagram and WhatsApp group. Within the WA group, the pioneers of information on donation activities are carried out by the management and study members who are group' members. For example, in a recent chat in Al Husna's WhatsApp group has been very intensively reporting about events in Palestine that Israel has attacked. They also open donations to help Muslims in Palestine. This condition shows that the philanthropy carried out by Al Husna does not only focus on local issues. They also respond to transnational Islam issues in solidarity to strengthen Muslims around the world. It opens Al Husna's relationship on humanitarian issues globally to not focus on accommodating "Islamist groups". Philanthropy at the group level, on the one hand, has the potential to expand Islamism by collaborating with

Islamist groups but on the other hand through “everyday philanthropy” conducted by the *majelis taklim* to assist members’ needs, contributing to strengthening the role of women in the *majelis taklim*. These social activists demonstrate the translation of Islamic traditions written in the religious scripture into daily charity practices with variations of negotiation (Derbal 2022).

At the individual level, Al Husna’s management and the congregation took the initiative to make open donations to social issues around them. They then used Al Husna as a space to gather aid. The distribution of assistance is varied and does not only focus on the Islamism movement, showing that each individual plays a role in expressing their respective subjectivity. Individual subjectivity to carry out philanthropic activities does not come from the *ustadz*’s orders but their initiative. Individual subjectivity not cooperating with Islamist groups becomes an opportunity to limit the ideas of Islamism.

Humaira

Majelis taklim Humaira organizes many social activities, both routine assistance and incidental assistance, to ongoing problems. The routine assistance that the Humaira provides is assistance to care for foster children, free medical treatment, *dakwah* in remote areas, garage sales, alms to homes and cottages, clean *mukena* (prayer hijab), basic needs for the elderly and poor.

The interesting thing from Humaira is that they innovate creative religious economics in philanthropy, one of which is through garage sales. The garage sale is a creative way used by Humaira to support social activity programs independently. The term “Garage Sale” refers to selling out or reselling used goods at a more affordable price. The garage sale program begins with collecting donations from the general public in the form of used goods suitable for use. The items collected were clothes

and household items. The proceeds from the sale are then used to carry out social activities such as renovating mosques in the Solo Raya area, purchasing Islamic boarding school facilities and orphanages, and donating foodstuffs to orphanages and cottages. On April 28, 2019, the Humaira held a garage sale and additional supporting activities such as preloved auctions, free medical treatment, blood donation, cheap groceries, and Islamic studies on the Obonk Steak Restaurant yard. The participants who attended were quite a lot, both male and female.

Garage sale funds are used for the renovation of Al Kautsar Tawangsari TPA, ape donations, Darul ‘Ula Sanggir Quran house, donations of bedding, cupboards, room equipment at the Aitam Orphanage, Al Birru Colomadu’s *tahfidz* (memorizing Al Quran) and *tabsin* (improve the reading Al Quran in correct way) learning equipment, Al Amin Wonogiri cottage renovation donations, donation of water storage for Fatimatus az Zahra cottage, donation of groceries and cottage equipment from NU Tarbiyatush Sholihin Wonogori.

In addition, Humaira also produces Humaira merchandise such as drinking bottles, key chains, tote bags, calendars, and T-shirts. These products are marketed during routine studies held, to be precise, at the Kalitan Mosque. After each study, the committee announce to the congregation that Humaira offers Humaira’s products for sale, and usually, they said that the sales proceeds are used to support Humaira’s *dakwah*. So that most buyers of these products are congregations from Humaira himself. Santo (2018) says that merchandise can express one’s identity and individuality in consumer society. An item can be a “reminder” for members of a community of participation, activities, and experiences that have been carried out. Thus the women’s interest in consuming merchandise sold by *majelis taklim*, one of which is based on their attachment to the community they participate in, is based on the desire to give alms through the purchase of *majelis taklim* goods.

There is also a program called #HumairaPrelovedCharity. Humaira created an Instagram account @preloved_byhumaira which currently contains 35 posts. Some of these posts contain photos of used goods that are still in good condition, accompanied by a description of the price of the goods. Items on display include bags, shoes, robes, watches, and wallets. In the description section, the proceeds from the sale are used to donate alms. Such a phenomenon is often referred to as the “Islamic market” where the Muslim community begins to express Islam in the modern space. Every individual or community has their way of doing the Islamic market (Latief 2017b; Lall and Park 2022).



Picture 2. Humaira’s Garage Sale (Instagram @kajianhumaira) and Preloved Charirty (Instagram @preloved_byhumaira)

Humaira is also doing incidental philanthropy in terms of opens donations to help with incidental problems. For example, Humaira carried out incidental philanthropy on a large scale in handling COVID-19, starting from providing personal protective equipment, vitamins, food, and drinks for health workers at the Solo Raya Hospital; Moewardi Hospital, Yarsis Hospital, Universitas Sebelas Maret (UNS) Hospital, and others. Humaira, together with ACT, also assisted victims of conflict and humanity in Palestine, Rohingya, Wamena, and the earthquake in Maluku.

They made an independent program based on a meeting in the Humaira administrators forum. At the group level, the Humaira's administrators have the highest authority in determining philanthropic programs. It is not recommendations from advisors or other philanthropic agents.

The description of Humaira's philanthropy program above shows the role and subjectivity of Humaira's administrators in organizing philanthropy programs. They made an independent program based on a meeting in the Humaira administrators forum. At the group level, the Humaira's administrators have the highest authority in determining philanthropic programs. It is not recommendations from advisors or other philanthropic agents. Therefore, it is assumed that, at the individual level the administrators and congregations in line with the program that Humaira has established. This assumption is evidenced by my interview with Lusi, one of the Humaira's congregations. Although she rarely participates in Humaira's religious gathering, Lusi knows about Humaira's social programs and gives appreciation.

It's good for Humaira, all of the staff are female, if I am not mistaken, besides the study, there was also social service if during the pandemic there was an open donation for helping APD, providing nutrition for medical personnel, if I am not mistaken during Ramadan there is also *takejil* (iftar menu) sharing, then there is also garage sale... that is great Humaira, ladies, with their busy schedule, still want to be involved in a lot of activities (Interview with Lusi, Surakarta, December, 2020).

Lusi admitted that she had participated in the Humaira donation program, donating money directly or transferring it through Humaira's account (Interview with Lusi, December 2020).

Humaira's program names such as caring for foster children, necessities for the elderly, free medical treatment, clean *mukena*, and alms savings, as well as creative philanthropy programs that are different

from other philanthropic programs in general, such as garage sale, preloved Humaira, selling tumblers, are a form of Humaira's subjectivity in determining the program. Moreover, the Humaira incidental program not only targets Islamic institutions, it also shows the inclusiveness and subjectivity of Humaira that have possibility to limit Islamist movement.

The philanthropic activities carried out by Humaira above are interpreted as the practice of Islamic values to work with Allah. This practice means that every effort made is a job that is considered expensive because God gave the work; it is part of expressing their piety. Humaira's authority in involving potential and management from Humaira's administrators and volunteers from the congregation is a way to empowering women in the *majelis taklim*. Philanthropy, according to Humaira's management, is part of their *dakwah* and aims to spread Islam. This goal can be seen as another interpretation of "*dakwah*" word. If in the Islamist movement sometimes it must be done violently, but through Humaira, *dakwah* is applied in the form of helping to lighten the burden of others. Thus, it can be concluded that Humaira's philanthropy program played a role in limiting the Islamist movement in Surakarta based on women's subjectivity.

Dakwah Squad

The Da'wah Squad has routine program of sharing *iftar* (breaking the fast) Ramadhan and *Sunnah* fasting to orphaned students, poor people, and needy people. The Da'wah Squad also has regular programs to support the Al Quran Education Park (TPA, Al Quran Educational Park) and *Ma'had*, not only in the Solo Raya area. Just like Humaira, Da'wah Squad also has a savings program called "*kencleng* Dakwah". *Kencleng* Dakwah is intended for congregations who want to become regular donors. The congregation brought the *kencleng* home to be filled; only once a month, it was collected again to the Da'wah Squad administrators.

While the incidental activities are programs carried out to respond to ongoing problems, such as assistance for flood victims, victims of the Wamena humanitarian tragedy, assistance for Muslim Uygur, Palestine and assistance for medical personnel and victims of COVID-19. The Da'wah Squad held a corona response program which was distributed on Instagram Da'wah Squad @dakwahsquadsolo on March 25, 2020, including assistance that would be realized in the form of hand soaps for mosques, masks for the community, personal protective equipment (APD) consisting of jumpsuits, gloves, masks for medical personnel and other urgent assistance related to the program. Some of the assisted hospitals were Manahan Health Center, Yarsis Hospital, DKT Hospital, and Banyu Bening Hospital.

The Da'wah Squad also has *Qurban* activities for remote areas that are in need. In its post on June 22, 2020, the Da'wah Squad opens donations for *Qurban* to remote areas, in the form of cows for 3 million and the goat for 2.5 million. In this post, those willing to donate will get interesting souvenirs and a portion of the thigh for (goat sacrifice) and 4 kg of meat for those who sacrifice cows. They quote a hadith "Whoever gets space but does not make *qurban*, then he should not bless our place of prayer" (H.R Ahmad).



Picture 3: Food packages for orphans and needy people against COVID-19 (Instagram @dakwahsquadsolo) and *Qurban* and Social Service (Instagram @dakwahsquadsolo)

The Da'wah Squad does not have regular donors, so the funds used to carry out these philanthropic activities are obtained through *infaq* boxes circulated in routine Da'wah Squad recitations every week. The amount of social funds used from the *infaq* box is 75%, while the remaining 15% is used for operational activities. However, during the covid, *infaq* also decreased, considering that the congregation who attended directly had also decreased (Interview with Ustadz Aziz (Da'wah Squad's Advisor) December 2020).

In Dakwah Squad, the women's subjectivity at the individual level can be seen from the response comes from Retno, the head of Da'wah Squad. In her post on Instagram @retno_phalupie on January 31, 2020, she responded to the book written by Umaier Khaz "The Journey to Xinjiang". In her post, she said that:

Initially, there was no plan to raise funds for Uygur Muslims, just a routine study. Nevertheless, after reading #TheJourneytoXianjiang by Ustad @umaierkhaz the idea

came. How do I help them? On January 26, coordinating with him to hold a fundraising event and inserting a little story about Uyghur Muslims in delivering the study material, *Alhamdulillah*, agreed...”6,401,500” the funds collected were to help slightly ease the burden on Uyghur Muslim Brothers (Instagram @retno_phalupie).

This post indicated that Retno chose to respond to the narrative in Umaier Khaz’s book with empathy to help Muslim brothers in Uyghur rather than respond to political aspects (see Khaz 2020). That choice is a representation of her subjectivity response to the Islamist movement. Retno’s response to carry out open donations to help Uyghur Muslims proves their subjectivity in responding to Islamist propaganda with philanthropy.

Table 1.1. The comparison of philanthropic programs from Al Husna, Humaira and Da’wah Squad

No.	Indicator	Al Husna		Humaira		Da’wah Squad	
		Group level	Individual level	Group level	Individual level	Group level	Individual level
1.	Source of funds	<i>Infaq</i> and regular donors from Al Husna members	Open donation in WA group initiated by the Al Husna’s members	Donors from Humaira members, <i>Infaq</i> , garage sales, preloved Humaira, selling merchandise	Individual donors for supporting the Humaira’s philanthropy program	<i>Infaq, kendeng dakwah</i>	Individual donors for supporting the Da’wah Squad’s philanthropy program
2.	Distribution	FKAM, DDJT, ACT	Other non-ideological institutions in need, society in general, hospital, Humanitarian activities	Humaira’s philanthropy program such as such as caring for foster children, necessities for the elderly, free medical treatment, clean <i>mukena</i> , and alms savings	Supporting the Humaira’s philanthropy program	Da’wah Squad philanthropy program such as <i>iftar</i> , TPA and orphans assistance, general hospital	Supporting the Da’wah Squad’s philanthropy program
3.	The type of philanthropy	Independent philanthropy and philanthropy in collaborated with Islamist group	Independent philanthropy	Independent and creative philanthropy	Independent and creative philanthropy	Independent philanthropy	Independent philanthropy

Independent and Creative Philanthropy: An Alternative Way to Limit Islamist Movement

What are the implications of women's independent and creative philanthropy? Women's authority in philanthropy regulated by women is related to their desire to carry out activities according to the organizational strategy they choose, whether separatism, assimilation, individualism or more auxiliary roles (E. Anwar 2018; Pribadi 2019; McCarthy 1996). This strategy has led to the formation of a new pattern that is different from philanthropy managed by men or other philanthropic institutions, just like some of the *majelis taklim* which chose to separate itself from philanthropic organizations and carry out independent philanthropy. Independent women's philanthropy is a philanthropy carried out purely on women's initiative in the *majelis taklim*. Independent philanthropy is carried out to support existing programs in the *majelis taklim* itself, not to accommodate other philanthropic institutions. Al Husna only has one independent philanthropic program, namely sharing for the preacher lodges that fill in Al Husna. When the *majelis taklim* has not yet carried out many philanthropic activities on its own, the *majelis taklim* are easily tempted by other philanthropic institutions, even from Islamist groups such as FKAM and DDII. Islamist groups then used this condition to raise funds to support their programs.

In contrast to Al Husna, Humaira has more independent philanthropic programs compiled by Humaira's administrators. Many philanthropic activities make Humaira quite busy, so they are not easily tempted to cooperate with philanthropic agents. This condition limits the opportunity for Islamist groups to enter the *majelis taklim* (see Sigillo 2020). Humaira represents women's organizations that carry out philanthropy independently in a way that has not been done by many philanthropic institutions, namely through creative philanthropy. They combine market orientation with belief through several creative philanthropic activities

such as selling tumblers, Humaira's preloved program, and holding a garage sale. Humaira's independent philanthropy strengthens the role of women in philanthropy and opens up a space of subjectivity for women to determine which one is best for them without focusing on Islamic ideologies but on how to get capital for humanity.

Da'wah Squad also has many independent philanthropic programs such as *iftar*, savings, TPA and orphans assistance. In independent philanthropy, the board has full autonomy in determining the distribution. This distribution shows that the more independent philanthropy carried out by women in the *majelis taklim* also reduces the space for Islamist groups to get involved in narrowing the space for Islamism in the *majelis taklim*.

In line with the above phenomenon, Anwar (2019) shows that in Surakarta, sharia has entered the sharia accommodation industry marked by the growth of sharia hotels. This phenomenon indicates that sharia has become an expression of economic identity that characterizes the daily life of devout Muslim middle class. The philanthropy carried out by the *majelis taklim* also shows that in addition to the large debate about a sharia-based state that is echoed at the level of state politics (Ahyar 2019), at the grassroots level, sharia has been accommodated through the presence of philanthropy in the *majelis taklim* as part of women's pieties expression.

Conclusion

The philanthropic activities carried out by the three *majelis taklim* show variations in subjectivity at the individual and group levels. On the one hand, at the group level, Al Husna, for example, became a place for the expansion of Islamism supported by islamization which accommodated Islamist groups such as FKAM and DDII. Al Husna has been used as a space for spreading the ideas of Islamism and as a support source of funds for Islamist groups. However, on the other hand, at the individual

level, each member at Al Husna still plays with their respective subjectivity and ambivalence by opening the way for philanthropy that does not have the ideology of Islamism and does not support the Islamist group. Whereas Humaira and Da'wah Squad have many creative and independent philanthropic activities in their philanthropic activities to not involve Islamist groups. The creative and independent philanthropy program has become an alternative way for Humaira and the Da'wah Squad to respond to the Islamist movement. This response means that although in the religious gatherings, the *majelis taklim* becomes a space for the expansion of Islamic ideas, in the philanthropic space, they can free themselves from the Islamist movement by expressing their subjectivity and piety through philanthropic programs.

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