

The Social Movement of Muhammadiyah in Southeast Sulawesi in Disaster Management

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Abstract

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This study examines the social movement of Muhammadiyah in Southeast Sulawesi in the context of disaster management. It aims to explore the ideological and moral foundations that motivate Muhammadiyah in Southeast Sulawesi to engage in disaster-related social actions. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings reveal that Islamic spiritual values, particularly those derived from al-Ma'un fiqh/theology, serve as the philosophical and moral basis of Muhammadiyah's social movement in disaster management. The implementation of this movement encompasses disaster preparedness and mitigation (pre-disaster), emergency response operations (during disaster), and post-disaster recovery actions. This study contributes to strengthening the moral framework of faith-based social movements and highlights Muhammadiyah's tangible role in promoting social responsibility, humanitarian values, and social justice within Indonesian society.

Keywords: Social Movement, Disaster Management, Al-Ma'un Fiqh/Theolog

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji gerak sosial Muhammadiyah Sulawesi Tenggara dalam penanggulangan bencana. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mendalami landasan ideologis dan moral yang melatarbelakangi keterlibatan Muhammadiyah Sulawesi Tenggara dalam aktivitas sosial kebencanaan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan studi dokumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai-nilai spiritualitas Islam, khususnya yang bersumber dari fikih/theologi al-Ma'un, menjadi landasan moral dan filosofis gerak sosial Muhammadiyah dalam penanggulangan bencana. Implementasi gerak sosial tersebut meliputi kegiatan mitigasi dan kesiapsiagaan (pra-bencana), operasi tanggap darurat (saat bencana), serta tindakan pemulihan pascabencana. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memperkuat kerangka moral gerak sosial berbasis keagamaan serta memberikan kontribusi nyata terhadap penguatan tanggung jawab sosial, nilai kemanusiaan, dan perwujudan keadilan sosial bagi masyarakat Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Gerak Sosial, Penanggulangan Bencana, Fikih/Teologi Al-Ma'un

INTRODUCTION

Disasters are events or a series of events that may occur at any time and in any place, caused by natural factors, non-natural factors, and/or human activities, resulting in loss of life, environmental damage, material losses, and psychological impacts. Such impacts demonstrate that disasters constitute not only physical hazards but also complex social risks affecting economic stability, social structures, and community resilience (Sumodiningrat, 1999). Due to the magnitude of threats posed by disasters, Indonesia must be adequately prepared to implement comprehensive disaster management measures. These measures include risk-based development policies, disaster prevention efforts, emergency response actions, and post-disaster rehabilitation and recovery programs that form an integrated disaster management cycle (Muhammadiyah, 2015).

In Indonesia, disaster management is institutionally supported by three main pillars: government, the private sector, and the community (BNPB, 2014). This framework emphasizes that disaster risk reduction and response cannot rely solely on the state but require active participation from civil society organizations. Within this context, faith-based organizations play a strategic role, particularly in mobilizing social capital, moral legitimacy, and community trust. Muhammadiyah, as a non-governmental organization (NGO) and simultaneously a faith-based organization (FBO), has emerged as one of the most influential actors in humanitarian and disaster-related social movements in Indonesia.

As an independent Islamic socio-religious organization, Muhammadiyah has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusive humanitarian engagement. Its social movement is not limited to serving Muslim communities but extends to broader society regardless of religious affiliation or social background. This inclusive orientation reflects the foundational vision of Muhammadiyah's founder, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, who emphasized the translation of Islamic teachings into concrete social action for the benefit of humanity. Through this approach, Muhammadiyah positions itself as a socio-religious movement that is deeply embedded within local, national, and global humanitarian networks (Nakamura, 1983).

Historically, Muhammadiyah's identity as a social movement is inseparable from its concern for marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Nakamura (1983) emphasized that Muhammadiyah should not merely be understood as a religious reform movement but also as a social movement that actively intervenes in societal problems. Historical records indicate that Muhammadiyah's social initiatives predate Indonesian independence. In 1923, through the establishment of Penolong Kesengsaraan Oemoum (PKO), Muhammadiyah founded clinics and polyclinics aimed at providing healthcare services for the poor, as well as poorhouses to assist vulnerable populations (Yuristiadi, 2015). Furthermore, Peacock (1968) documented that by 1939 Muhammadiyah had established 1,744 educational institutions at various levels, demonstrating the organization's long-standing commitment to social service and human development.

This historical orientation continues to shape Muhammadiyah's contemporary social engagement. Empirical studies show that Muhammadiyah's religious movement at the grassroots level particularly at branch and sub-branch levels often begins with concrete social actions that directly address the needs of lower socioeconomic groups (Handayani et al., 2020). Rather than prioritizing doctrinal polemics or controversial theological debates, Muhammadiyah emphasizes practical humanitarian work within social spaces, especially among grassroots communities. This orientation reflects a broader commitment to philanthropy, compassion, and social solidarity as central elements of Islamic practice (Ammar, 2017; Sulek, 2010).

Philanthropy has thus become an intrinsic characteristic of Muhammadiyah's social movement. Arfandi (2017) argued that philanthropic action is inseparable from Muhammadiyah's organizational identity and functions as a moral-religious calling. This calling is deeply rooted in the theological and jurisprudential framework of fiqh al-Ma'un, derived from Surah al-Ma'un in the Qur'an. According to Noer (1973) and Jainuri (1999), the development of fiqh al-Ma'un by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan inspired Muhammadiyah members to actively liberate mustadh'afin (the oppressed and marginalized) from structural injustice. The practical manifestations of this theology include the establishment of orphanages, hospitals, schools, and various social welfare institutions (el-Fikri, 2010).

The spirit of al-Ma'un theology continues to guide Muhammadiyah's contemporary social movements, including disaster management initiatives. Ahmad Dahlan emphasized that Qur'anic teachings should not merely be memorized or understood textually, but must be internalized and practiced in everyday life. This interpretive approach transformed Muhammadiyah into a dynamic movement that translates religious values into systematic and organized social action. Consequently, disaster management within Muhammadiyah is understood not merely as a technical response to emergencies, but as a moral obligation rooted in Islamic ethics and social responsibility.

In the contemporary Indonesian context, Muhammadiyah's disaster-related social movement has expanded institutionally through the establishment of Lembaga Amil Zakat Muhammadiyah (LAZISMU) and Lembaga Penanggulangan Bencana Muhammadiyah, widely known as the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC). LAZISMU functions as a national zakat institution that mobilizes and manages philanthropic resources for community empowerment (Tohari, 2015; Latif, 2017), while MDMC serves as Muhammadiyah's specialized body for disaster mitigation, emergency response, and post-disaster recovery. MDMC reportedly responds to approximately 50–70 disaster events annually at local, national, and global levels (Republika, 2020). Moreover, a survey conducted by the Institute for Strategic Studies and Development (LKSP) identified Muhammadiyah as one of the most responsive civil society organizations in addressing the COVID-19 crisis in Indonesia (Republika, 2020).

Despite the growing number of studies examining Muhammadiyah's philanthropic activities and disaster management roles, most existing research focuses on institutional performance, program implementation, or sector-specific outcomes (Sakban, 2020; Suwaryo, 2020; Sari, 2020). While these studies provide valuable operational insights, they tend to underexplore the ideological foundations, moral motivations, and value-based frameworks that shape Muhammadiyah's disaster management as a coherent social movement. In addition, region-specific analyses—particularly those focusing on Southeast Sulawesi—remain limited, resulting in an incomplete understanding of how al-Ma'un theology is operationalized within localized disaster management contexts (Latif, 2017; el-Fikri, 2010).

Based on this gap, this study aims to examine the social movement of Muhammadiyah in Southeast Sulawesi in the context of disaster management by exploring its moral-theological foundations and modes of implementation. Specifically, this research seeks to address the following questions: (1) What Islamic moral and theological values underpin Muhammadiyah's social movement in disaster management in Southeast Sulawesi? and (2) How are these values translated into concrete disaster management practices across pre-disaster, emergency response, and post-disaster phases through LAZISMU and MDMC? By focusing on the period between 2018 and 2021, this study provides a contextual and value-based analysis of faith-driven disaster management practices at the regional level.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the discourse on faith-based social movements and disaster management. By integrating theological perspectives with empirical analysis, this study offers a deeper understanding of how Islamic values are institutionalized within structured humanitarian practices. Furthermore, it reinforces the role of Muhammadiyah as a moral and social actor in promoting humanitarian responsibility, inclusive disaster governance, and social justice within Indonesian society..

METHODS

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a qualitative research design with phenomenological and sociological approaches. The phenomenological approach was used to explore the lived experiences, meanings, and moral interpretations of Muhammadiyah actors involved in disaster management activities. Meanwhile, the sociological approach enabled the analysis of Muhammadiyah's social movement as a collective action embedded within broader social, cultural, and institutional contexts. This combination allowed the study to capture both subjective meanings and structural dimensions of faith-based disaster management practices.

Research Site and Context

The research was conducted within the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC) of Southeast Sulawesi, with a particular focus on disaster-affected

areas in Konawe and North Konawe Regencies. These locations were selected purposively due to their vulnerability to recurrent flood disasters and the active involvement of Muhammadiyah institutions especially MDMC and LAZISMU in disaster response, mitigation, and recovery efforts during the period 2018–2021.

Data Sources

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained from key informants, including regional leaders of Muhammadiyah in Southeast Sulawesi, administrators of LAZISMU and MDMC, members of the Muhammadiyah organization, religious leaders, local government officials, and community members directly involved in or affected by disaster management activities. Secondary data consisted of documents that supported and contextualized the primary data, such as organizational reports, policy documents, activity records, official publications, and relevant archival materials related to Muhammadiyah's disaster management programs.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation study. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore informants' perspectives on the moral, theological, and organizational foundations of Muhammadiyah's disaster-related social movement. Participant observation allowed the researcher to directly observe disaster management practices, organizational interactions, and community engagement processes. Documentation study was used to examine written records and institutional materials to corroborate and enrich the empirical findings.

Research Instrument and Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary research instrument. Accordingly, the researcher and, where applicable, research assistants played a central role in data collection, interpretation, and analysis. Data collection procedures were continuously adjusted in accordance with the research approach to ensure sensitivity to social context, cultural meanings, and ethical considerations during fieldwork.

Data Analysis Method

This study applied a *thick description* method in data analysis. Thick description requires the researcher to be deeply involved in the research setting in order to understand cultural meanings, social interactions, and value systems from the perspective of the actors involved. Through this method, empirical findings were analyzed not merely as observable actions but as socially and theologically meaningful practices embedded within Muhammadiyah's *al-Ma'un*-inspired social movement.

Trustworthiness and Data Validation

To ensure data credibility and trustworthiness, this study employed triangulation strategies, including source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants. Technique triangulation involved cross-checking data from interviews, observations, and documents. Time triangulation was applied by conducting data collection at different periods to ensure consistency and reliability of findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Foundations of Muhammadiyah's Social Movement in Disaster Management

The findings indicate that Muhammadiyah's social movement in Southeast Sulawesi is fundamentally grounded in the aspiration to realize a just, prosperous, and harmonious society, as articulated in the organizational vision of building a *baldatun thayyibatun wa rabbun ghafur*. This vision frames disaster management not merely as technical intervention, but as a moral and collective responsibility aimed at safeguarding human dignity and social welfare. Within this framework, the theology of *al-Ma'un* serves as the ethical foundation that guides both individual and collective actions in responding to disaster situations.

Empirical data reveal that *al-Ma'un* theology is understood by Muhammadiyah actors as a value system emphasizing social solidarity, compassion, equality, and justice. These values shape Muhammadiyah's role as a transformative social movement that prioritizes education, quality of life improvement, welfare, and social justice as integral goals. Disaster management activities are therefore perceived as an extension of Muhammadiyah's broader mission of social reform and humanitarian service.

At the institutional level, the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC) of Southeast Sulawesi operates as a coordinated and prepared disaster response unit. Field findings show that MDMC Southeast Sulawesi maintains readiness mechanisms that enable rapid deployment to disaster-affected areas, particularly during flood events in Konawe and North Konawe Regencies.

"Our disaster response team is always prepared to be directly involved in every disaster event. We do not require a long time to mobilize because preparation has been carried out in advance so that we can act immediately on the day a disaster occurs," (Interviewee A).

The presence of MDMC Southeast Sulawesi in disaster areas is consistently marked by the establishment of volunteer posts, emergency health services, and temporary shelters for affected communities. These actions reflect an organized management system supported by trained volunteers who operate under clear operational procedures.

"Whenever a disaster occurs, MDMC ensures the establishment of emergency posts and basic services for affected residents," (Interviewee B).

The findings further demonstrate that MDMC Southeast Sulawesi explicitly emphasizes humanitarian neutrality in its operations. Volunteers are instructed to prioritize social awareness and humanitarian solidarity over personal, organizational, or group interests.

"In disaster situations, we are guided by humanitarian values. Assistance is provided without considering religion, ethnicity, or social background," (Interviewee C).

This principle illustrates the manifestation of *al-Ma'un* theology as lived religious practice through concrete humanitarian action.

Implementation of Muhammadiyah's Social Movement in Disaster Management

The implementation of Muhammadiyah's social movement in Southeast Sulawesi is reflected through three interconnected phases of disaster management: emergency response, pre-disaster preparedness, and post-disaster recovery.

Emergency Response Phase

During the emergency response phase, MDMC Southeast Sulawesi demonstrates a responsive and initiative-based approach to disaster situations. Field data show that disaster response operations focus on providing immediate material assistance and essential services to affected communities. These include food distribution, emergency health services, and logistical support.

"Our priority during emergencies is ensuring that victims' basic needs are met as quickly as possible," (Interviewee D).

This phase represents the operational dimension of disaster management, where rapid action is essential to minimize casualties and further losses.

Pre-Disaster Phase

The pre-disaster phase emphasizes preparedness and mitigation efforts. MDMC Southeast Sulawesi conducts various activities aimed at strengthening community readiness, including volunteer training, disaster education, and capacity-building programs. Field observations reveal that volunteers receive training involving multiple sectors, such as health services, emergency response, logistics, education, and psychosocial support.

"We regularly conduct disaster preparedness training involving various stakeholders to ensure readiness before disasters occur," (Interviewee E).

Mitigation efforts also include community-based disaster education, particularly in disaster-prone villages and schools. These initiatives aim to cultivate awareness, preparedness, and resilience among local residents.

"We provide disaster education in villages that are vulnerable to floods so that communities can better prepare themselves," (Interviewee F).

Post-Disaster Phase

In the post-disaster phase, MDMC Southeast Sulawesi focuses primarily on non-structural recovery efforts. Findings indicate that volunteers remain engaged after

emergency conditions subside, providing health services, psychosocial support, and assistance in restoring basic community facilities. Special attention is given to vulnerable groups, including children, women, and the elderly.

“Psychological recovery is as important as physical recovery, especially for children affected by disasters,” (Interviewee G).

Field data also reveal challenges during the rehabilitation process, particularly related to community expectations toward government compensation.

“During the recovery phase, disagreements sometimes arise regarding compensation issues, which can disrupt rehabilitation efforts,” (Interviewee H).

These dynamics highlight the complexity of post-disaster recovery and the importance of coordination among stakeholders.

Discussion

The findings of this study reaffirm that Muhammadiyah’s disaster management activities represent a faith-based social movement rooted in *fiqh* and theology of *al-Ma’un*. This theological framework functions as a moral compass that translates Islamic teachings into concrete humanitarian practices, reinforcing previous studies that identify Muhammadiyah as both a religious and social movement oriented toward social reform and philanthropy (Nakamura, 1983; Noer, 1973; el-Fikri, 2010).

The emphasis on humanitarian neutrality and inclusivity observed in MDMC Southeast Sulawesi aligns with the broader philanthropic orientation of Muhammadiyah. Prior research highlights that Muhammadiyah’s philanthropic identity is characterized by universal compassion and social responsibility rather than sectarian interests (Ammar, 2017; Sulek, 2010). The findings of this study extend this understanding by demonstrating how such values are operationalized in disaster contexts through organized institutional mechanisms.

Furthermore, the integration of preparedness, emergency response, and recovery within MDMC’s operational framework reflects a comprehensive approach to disaster management. This approach corresponds with contemporary disaster management principles that emphasize risk reduction, preparedness, and community resilience (Muhammadiyah, 2015). By embedding these principles within a faith-based organizational structure, Muhammadiyah contributes to bridging moral values and technical disaster management practices.

The strong emphasis on volunteer training and community-based education observed in the pre-disaster phase supports earlier findings that highlight the importance of grassroots engagement in effective disaster mitigation (Suwaryo, 2020; Sakban, 2020). MDMC Southeast Sulawesi’s initiatives in schools and disaster-prone villages demonstrate how religious organizations can function as agents of social learning and resilience-building at the local level.

Finally, the challenges identified during post-disaster recovery, particularly regarding community expectations and coordination with government authorities, underscore the complex social dynamics of disaster management. These findings

resonate with previous studies that emphasize the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration and clear communication in post-disaster rehabilitation processes (Sari, 2020; Latif, 2017). Overall, this study contributes to the literature by offering a value-based, region-specific analysis of Muhammadiyah's disaster management practices, highlighting the role of *al-Ma'un* theology in shaping a systematic and sustainable faith-driven social movement.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the social movement of Muhammadiyah is fundamentally grounded in the framework of fiqh and theology of *al-Ma'un*, which functions not as a simplification or reduction of Islamic teachings, but as a symbolic-philosophical language that emphasizes the realization of social harmony. The concept of *al-Ma'un* provides a moral and spiritual foundation that integrates individual and collective actions within a balanced fulfillment of private and social rights. This theological orientation nurtures values of empathy, solidarity, universal brotherhood, and shared responsibility, which continuously shape the ethical and spiritual motivation behind Muhammadiyah's social engagement. In the context of disaster management, the implementation of Muhammadiyah's social movement is manifested through a comprehensive and systematic approach encompassing post-disaster emergency response in the form of material assistance and services, pre-disaster activities focused on anticipation, preparedness, and risk mitigation, as well as post-disaster programs aimed at physical and psychological recovery and rehabilitation. These findings demonstrate that Muhammadiyah's disaster management practices are not incidental or reactive, but represent an integrated, value-driven social movement rooted in *al-Ma'un* theology and oriented toward humanitarian responsibility and social justice.

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