



The strength of Muhammadiyah's existence in the modern era: Pillars of empowerment and community strengthening

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ABSTRACT

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A study regarding the role of Muhammadiyah in the pillars of community empowerment and strengthening needs to be carried out, considering that this organization is the largest organization in Indonesia. This article aimed to analyze the strength of Muhammadiyah's existence which focuses on the pillars of empowerment and strengthening of society. This paper was prepared using library research methods. Data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. Data visualization, especially regarding references and keywords that frequently appear, is assisted with VOSviewer. The results show that Muhammadiyah is an Islamic organization that has a clear and real role in empowering and strengthening of society. Muhammadiyah has a central role in the field of philanthropy, in fact this has become Muhammadiyah's identity. Al-Ma'un became the ideological-theological foundation of Muhammadiyah's struggle. The advocacy movement through community empowerment has changed the face of Muhammadiyah to become more populist. Community empowerment is carried out through action programs that directly touch on the real problems of poor and marginalized communities represented by farmers, fishermen, livestock breeders, workers, urban poor communities and people with disabilities. Women's groups who have been marginalized and tend to be subordinated have also become targets of empowerment work carried out by Muhammadiyah, especially through its wing organization, namely Aisyiyah.

Kata Kunci

Penguatan komunitas
Pemberdayaan
Muhammadiyah
Kedermawanan

Kekuatan eksistensi Muhammadiyah di era modern: Pilar pemberdayaan dan penguatan masyarakat. Kajian mengenai peran Muhammadiyah dalam pilar pemberdayaan dan penguatan masyarakat perlu dilakukan, mengingat organisasi ini merupakan organisasi terbesar di Indonesia. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kekuatan eksistensi Muhammadiyah yang menitikberatkan pada pilar pemberdayaan dan penguatan masyarakat. Makalah ini disusun dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis deskriptif kualitatif. Visualisasi data khususnya mengenai referensi dan kata kunci yang sering muncul dibantu dengan VOSviewer. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa Muhammadiyah merupakan organisasi Islam yang mempunyai peran jelas dan nyata dalam pemberdayaan dan penguatan masyarakat. Muhammadiyah mempunyai peran sentral dalam bidang filantropi, bahkan hal ini sudah menjadi identitas Muhammadiyah. Al-Ma'un menjadi landasan ideologis-teologis perjuangan Muhammadiyah. Gerakan advokasi melalui pemberdayaan masyarakat telah mengubah wajah Muhammadiyah menjadi lebih kerakyatan. Pemberdayaan masyarakat dilakukan melalui program aksi yang menyentuh langsung permasalahan nyata masyarakat miskin dan marginal yang diwakili oleh petani, nelayan, peternak, pekerja, masyarakat miskin perkotaan, dan penyandang disabilitas. Kelompok perempuan yang selama ini terpinggirkan dan cenderung tersubordinasi juga menjadi sasaran kerja pemberdayaan yang dilakukan oleh Muhammadiyah, khususnya melalui organisasi sayapnya yaitu Aisyiyah.

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INTRODUCTION

Muhammadiyah is an Islamic movement which in its preaching carries out the mission of *Amar makruf Nahi Mungkar* and *tajdid*, based on Islam based on the Al-Quran and As-Sunnah. In accordance with its identity, Muhammadiyah is always *Istiqomah* in its high commitment to advancing the lives of the people and nation, as well as the world of humanity as a form of effort to spread Islam with the pattern of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. The birth of Muhammadiyah was not only as an Islamic movement that prioritizes thought reform, but also as an organization oriented towards realizing a truly Islamic society (Elihami, 2022; Ferihana, 2022; Ramadhan, 2022; Wardiyanto et al., 2020).

The role played by Muhammadiyah takes place in various dynamics. Since its founding in 1912 during the colonial era, the Islamic movement formed by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan experienced the grip of colonialist politics, as was the same thing experienced by all Indonesian people. In the early days of independence and the old order, Muhammadiyah experienced various difficulties due to national political conflicts, but the Islamic movement continued to carry out its work in preaching and community activities. Muhammadiyah also continues its struggle to develop business charities and *da'wah* activities, even under a depoliticizing regime and authoritarian political policies during the New Order era (Aprillianti et al., 2022; Bakry et al., 2021). In the reform era, Muhammadiyah revitalized and improved the quality of its preaching by taking advantage of open national conditions. Through a long journey, Muhammadiyah has been accepted by the wider community as one of the pillars of Islamic strength that makes a valuable contribution to the progress of mankind (Nashir, 2015).

Muhammadiyah has established many schools, ranging from kindergartens, primary to secondary schools, universities, financial institutions, publishing and other charities. Muhammadiyah also builds houses of worship, as well as carrying out *da'wah* steps in various forms of community development activities spread throughout the country. In the social sector, Muhammadiyah has established orphanages and nursing homes, while in the health sector, this organization has built medical centers and hospitals, in order to free Muslims from the shackles of ignorance, backwardness and poverty. Muhammadiyah never stops carrying out its national and humanitarian role in national and global dynamics. Muhammadiyah's work shows that the Islamic Movement's mission is charitable for the sake of progress and enlightenment which leads to the benefit of the wider community (Hamami, 2021; Lestari & Fauzi, 2022; Muhammadiyah & Kabupaten, 2024; Setyawan, 2017; Tongat, 2023).

It is felt that Muhammadiyah's dynamic steps and progress have not yet reached the peak of success in its ideals and goals. Thus, Muhammadiyah is increasingly required to be steadfast in revitalizing its movement in all areas of life. Muhammadiyah continues to carry out reforms (*tajdid*) in every movement, so that in the complex modern era of the 21st century it can appear as a pillar of strength for the civilizational enlightenment movement, in accordance with the beliefs and personality of the organization. As the 46th Congress in Yogyakarta in 2010 which carried the theme "Progressing Islam" showed that Muhammadiyah is a reforming Islamic movement that continues to take part in advancing the lives of the people and universal humanity.

In the modern era, Muhammadiyah also plays a role in playing the digital world, this is important to do because it is very relevant to the conditions that have occurred in the last decade. This article was aimed to analyze the strength of Muhammadiyah's existence in the modern era, which focuses on the pillars of empowerment and community strengthening. This study contributes to a picture of Muhammadiyah's strength to continue to exist in the face of current challenges, so that it can be used as a guide for Muhammadiyah members or researchers who are focused or interested in studying Muhammadiyah to understand the direction of Muhammadiyah's struggle holistically, especially on the pillars of empowerment and community strengthening (Aprillianti et al., 2022; Sugianto & Darmayanti, 2022).

This study is related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Muhammadiyah has become one of the organizations that supports SDGs in Indonesia (Trisnaningtyas, 2023). The Muhammadiyah movement is included in the expanded impact category, its big impact touches on 9 issue points which can be translated into six movements, namely poverty alleviation, health services, women's empowerment, education for all, economic improvement, environmental preservation (Echo, 2023). *Lembaga Amil Zakat, Infak dan Shadakah Muhammadiyah* (LazisMu) or Amil Zakat, Infaq and Sadaqah Muhammadiyah Institution as a philanthropic institution belonging to Muhammadiyah, it takes several parts in accordance with the 5 pillars of LazisMu, namely education, health, economics, *da'wah* and social humanity (Ardianto, 2020).

METHOD

This paper was prepared using the library research method. Library research limits its activities to library collection materials only without requiring field research (Sari & Asmendri, 2020). This technique is used to collect data related to the problems discussed from various literary sources, including books, research report, scientific journals, and articles that are relevant to the topics discussed. Information obtained from various sources will be studied to understand Muhammadiyah's beliefs, values, organizational culture, as well as management and leadership systems.

In connection with this research, considering that currently it is a digital world and almost all reference sources are available online (there is also an e-catalog), the research uses a reference search tool, namely Google. Researchers also use the world's leading indexer, namely Scopus, to ensure that the references used are quality. The data obtained was then analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis, to produce data that could be described through the results of the behavior and sentences observed by the researcher. In data analysis, the interactive model used is content analysis which refers to Miles et al (2019). According to Ilyas (2016), In general, data analysis in this research was carried out through the following stages; (1) record all data findings in the library; (2) reviewing data records, and separating data that is considered important and unimportant, this work is repeated again to check for possible classification errors; (3) describe the data that has been classified taking into account the focus and objectives of the research; and (4) make a final analysis in the form of a research results report. As for data visualization, especially regarding references and keywords that often appear, using VOSviewer software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Muhammadiyah in the Literature Spotlight

So far, the Muhammadiyah organization is known as the second largest Islamic organization in Indonesia based on old standards and theories regarding quantity (number of masses). However, recently, these quantity-based measures have become increasingly irrelevant. Experts began to measure the status of 'largest organizations' based on quality. Some social scientists have defined new categories. As a result, the Muhammadiyah organization is called the largest modern Islamic organization in Indonesia, even the world. This great achievement achieved by Muhammadiyah was not the result of a short struggle, but was a long and dedicated struggle from Muhammadiyah leaders and members spread throughout the world. Until now, Muhammadiyah continues to exist carrying out its da'wah and social activities for the benefit of the people. Obstacles in Muhammadiyah's journey have never dampened the organization's progress.

We tried to analyze Muhammadiyah's position, based on the highlights of various researchers whose articles have been published in journals indexed by Scopus. Thus, these articles have been included in the Scopus database. We focused on articles that used the word "Muhammadiyah" in the title, and focused on "social sciences" articles. The data was simulated with VOSviewer, the results are as presented in Figure 1.

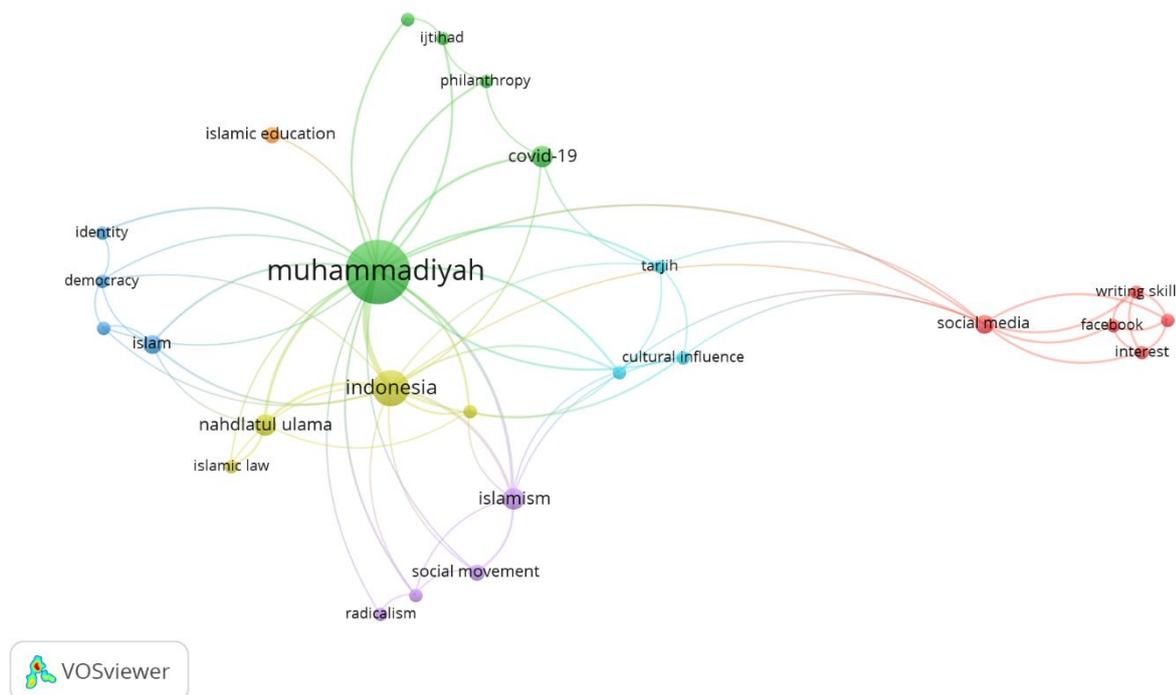


Figure 1. Relationship between Muhammadiyah and various keywords in Scopus (Source: Authors' own elaboration, using VOSviewer software)

Figure 1 shows that Muhammadiyah is an Islamic organization that has a clear and real role in social movements and cultural influence. In this regard, Muhammadiyah has a central role in philanthropy, in fact this has become Muhammadiyah's identity. One thing that is still close in our memory is the role of Muhammadiyah in helping overcome the problem of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Muhammadiyah's participation in handling Covid-19 in Indonesia is significant. Since its formation on March 2 2020, the Muhammadiyah Covid-19 Command Center (MCCC) as part of the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC) has played a role, among other things, in providing health services, social assistance, outreach and education about Covid-19, as well as Covid-19 vaccination. Apart from that, as a management agency, it has participated in the management of the Covid-19 disaster and has tried to do its best in carrying out its duties as a Muhammadiyah disaster management agency. Of the eight stages of disaster management, MDMC has participated in 6 stages, namely; 1) preparedness, 2) mitigation, 3) early warning, 4) emergency response, 5) emergency assistance, and 6) recovery. Disaster management activities are carried out in all regions in Indonesia with millions of people receiving benefits (Alfaris, 2022).

Muhammadiyah, an Islamic organization in Indonesia, has played an important role in philanthropy and community strengthening through various Empowerment and Community Strengthening initiatives. Through its programs, Muhammadiyah is committed to improving community welfare through a holistic approach, including education, health, economics and religion. They have established schools, hospitals, health centers and sharia economic institutions to empower communities, especially the marginalized, to become economically independent and improve their standard of living.

Apart from that, Muhammadiyah is also active in providing social assistance in the form of food, clothing and shelter for those in need, as well as being involved in infrastructure development programs in remote areas. With this approach, Muhammadiyah not only acts as a provider of material assistance, but also as an agent of social change who works to strengthen the local community as a whole. Thus, Muhammadiyah's role in philanthropy and community strengthening in Empowerment and Community Strengthening efforts is very significant in bringing positive change to Indonesian society.

Muhammadiyah and its relationship to Community Empowerment and Strengthening

As an Islamic organization and together with the autonomous organizations under it, Muhammadiyah pledges itself to be a movement that carries out the mission of da'wah and tajdid based on Islam, based on the Al-Quran and As-Sunnah. The spirit of returning to the Al-Quran and Hadith is especially found in Surah Al-Maun verses 1-7 and Surah Ali-Imran verse 104. These two suras have become a characteristic and permanent value in the organizational culture shared by all Muhammadiyah members. The values and norms that grow and develop from Islamic teachings in Muhammadiyah eventually become organizational culture (Mansyur dan Ahmad, 2015).

Since its inception, Muhammadiyah has shown its enormous contribution to the Indonesian nation, especially Muslims. Muhammadiyah has liberated Muslims from the shackles of religious practices mixed with superstition, bid'ah and khurafat towards an Islam that is in accordance with the teachings of the Al-Quran and Sunnah. Muhammadiyah also participates in efforts to enlighten the people through the field of education by establishing schools from kindergarten to tertiary level (Figure 2). In the health and social sector, the organization established orphanages (Figure 3), medical centers and hospitals (Figure 4). This step was taken to save Muslims from backwardness, poverty and ignorance. Muhammadiyah was also present and contributed significantly in determining the future fate of the Indonesian state.



Figure 2. Example of a Muhammadiyah educational institution (SMP Mu Ahmad Dahlan, 2018).



Figure 3. Example of a Muhammadiyah orphanage (Panti Asuhan Muhammadiyah Magetan, 2020).



Figure 4. Example of a Muhammadiyah Hospital (source: UMM Hospital)

Muhammadiyah is not a pure social movement but a social movement linked to Islam which makes Islam a solution to social and life problems. Muhammadiyah, as an Islamic movement, has an obligation to convey da'wah as a form of acting on behalf of the Islamic movement, because da'wah is the breath of the Islamic religion. However, Muhammadiyah's important role is not only in religious affairs and da'wah, but Muhammadiyah must be able to position itself as a social movement as a form of embodiment of the messages contained in Islamic teachings (Hakim & Muslikhati, 2022). After a century of this social-religious movement, the tajdid movement has begun to embrace new areas in the field of community empowerment. (Karsiman & Eddyanto, 2018). The hypothesis proposed here is that the al-Maun ethos of KH. Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah, has been reinterpreted by subsequent generations after a century.

In fact, community empowerment is an economic development concept that summarizes social values. This concept reflects a new development paradigm, namely one that is "people-centered, participatory, empowering, and sustainable". This concept is broader, not only meeting basic needs (basic needs) or providing a mechanism to prevent the process of further impoverishment (safety net), whose thinking has recently been developed as an effort to find alternatives to past growth concepts (Khoiruddin, 2019).

In fact, the basic character of Muhammadiyah is empowerment and social service. In a historical context, the early generation of Muhammadiyah in the Kiai Dahlan era pioneered many efforts to develop communities or congregations in society. The founder of Muhammadiyah formed and fostered study groups such as Wal-Ashri, Fathul Asrar Miftahu Sa'adah, Nurul Iman, and others. This was followed by the establishment of Qismul Arqa, a group of boys and girls who were trained in their homes or dormitories, which became the embryo for the birth of Madrasah Mu'allimin and Mu'allimat Yogyakarta. Kiai and his closest friends also fostered scouting, which gave birth to Hizbul Wathan in 1918.

Empowering women through Sopotresno as the embryo of Aisiyiah in 1917. Also developing Praja Students as the embryo of the Muhammadiyah Student Association in 1961(Khoiruddin, 2019).

Al-Ma'un became the ideological-theological basis for Muhammadiyah's struggle. The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of PP Muhammadiyah has formulated the normative basis of al-Ma'un theology into a more operational Fikih al-Ma'un. Fikih al-Ma'un as a complement to the Muhammadiyah movement system to strengthen the commitment to advocacy da'wah. The advocacy movement through community empowerment has more or less changed the face of Muhammadiyah. Many people think that Muhammadiyah's preaching tends to be elitist and has shifted to become more populist. If so far the empowerment efforts carried out by Muhammadiyah have mostly occurred around business charities, currently community empowerment is carried out through action programs that directly touch the real problems of poor and marginalized communities represented by farmers, fishermen, livestock breeders, laborers, the urban poor, and disabled people (Khoiruddin, 2019). Women's groups, which have been marginalized and tend to be subordinated, are also the target of empowerment work carried out by Muhammadiyah, especially through its wing organization, namely Aisiyiah (Rohana, 2018). One of the social capital possessed by the Indonesian people to empower society from before independence until now is 'Aisiyiah. Since its founding in 1917, 'Aisiyiah has had many models of community empowerment through its movements spread throughout Indonesia and abroad (Sofia, 2021), as exemplified in Figure 5.



Figure 5. Examples of women and children empowerment activities by Aisiyiah (Buletin Sleman, 2023)

Muhammadiyah and Aisiyiah have a crucial role in empowering and strengthening women's communities through programs aimed at increasing women's access to education, reproductive health, skills training and economic empowerment. Through this initiative, they strive to reduce the gender gap and empower women to have a more active role in community development and society as a whole.

CONCLUSION

Muhammadiyah is an Islamic organization that has a clear and real role in social movements and cultural influence. In this case, Muhammadiyah has a central role in the field of philanthropy, in fact this has become Muhammadiyah's identity. One thing that still sticks in our memories is Muhammadiyah's role in helping overcome the problem of the Covid-19 pandemic. Al-Ma'un became the ideological-theological foundation of Muhammadiyah's struggle. The advocacy movement through community empowerment has more or less changed the face of Muhammadiyah, shifting to become more populist. If so far the empowerment efforts carried out by Muhammadiyah have mostly occurred in business charities, now community empowerment is carried out through action programs that directly touch the real problems of poor and marginalized communities represented by farmers, fishermen, livestock breeders, laborers, urban poor communities, and people with disabilities. Women's groups who have been marginalized and tend to be subordinated have also become targets of empowerment work carried out by Muhammadiyah, especially through its wing organization, namely Aisiyiah.

This study only focuses on the pillars of empowerment and community strengthening. Therefore, future researchers or writers can focus on other pillars, for example on Muhammadiyah's beliefs and ideals, Muhammadiyah's organizational culture, and Muhammadiyah's management and leadership system. In this way the study will be more holistic and varied.

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