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Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning in Lazismu Sudan's Philanthropic Programs for the Character Development of Indonesian

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ABSTRACT

Islamic philanthropy offers opportunities for character development through authentic humanitarian experiences. However, its role as a transformative learning environment for Indonesian students remains underexplored, particularly within humanitarian contexts abroad. This study aims to analyze how Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs contribute to students' character formation through Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. Employing a qualitative case study design, the research began on January 22, 2026, and involved one purposively selected informant serving as Treasurer I of Lazismu Sudan. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, then analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model. Triangulation and member checking were employed to enhance data trustworthiness. The findings indicate five interconnected stages of transformative learning. Direct encounters with humanitarian challenges, particularly limited access to clean water, stimulated critical awareness. Program evaluation encouraged reflection on amanah, transparency, and accountability, while collaborative dialogue facilitated shared meaning-making and collective decision-making. These experiences fostered greater empathy, social responsibility, and a stronger humanitarian identity. Sustained participation in fundraising, program coordination, and aid distribution further translated transformed perspectives into social action. This study conceptualizes Islamic philanthropy as a transformative learning ecosystem that integrates humanitarian service with character education. Nevertheless, its findings reflect one informant's account and require further investigation across diverse student experiences.

Keywords: *Transformative Learning, Jack Mezirow, Islamic Philanthropy, Lazismu Sudan, Character Development.*

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education in the twenty-first century faces increasingly complex challenges arising from a wide range of social, humanitarian, and global issues.[1] Universities are no longer expected merely to produce academically competent graduates but are also required to cultivate individuals who possess strong character, critical thinking skills, leadership, empathy, and social responsibility.[2] Accordingly, the learning process should provide students with authentic experiences that enable them to engage directly with societal realities, allowing the knowledge they acquire to be internalized into attitudes and behaviors rather than remaining at the conceptual level.[3] In this regard, character development has become one of the primary objectives of higher education, as it serves as the foundation for academic competence while fostering concern for society and humanity.[4]

This objective is consistent with the goals of Islamic Education, which emphasizes not only the acquisition of Islamic knowledge but also the development of individuals who are faithful, morally upright, and socially responsible.[5] The Qur'an commands Muslims to cooperate in righteousness and piety (Surah Al-Mā'idah [5]: 2),[6] explains that true righteousness is manifested through concern for the poor, orphans, travelers, and other vulnerable groups (Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 177),[7] and encourages believers to spend from what they love as an expression of genuine righteousness (Surah Āli 'Imrān [3]: 92).[8] These teachings are further reinforced by the Prophet Muhammad's traditions, which state that the best of people are those who are most beneficial to others, and that believers are like one body; when one part suffers, the entire body shares in its pain. These normative foundations demonstrate that social responsibility and philanthropy constitute practical manifestations of Islamic teachings and represent integral components of Islamic Education in shaping students' character.[9]

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[1] Vladislav Kaputa, Erika Loučanová, and Fernando A Tejerina-Gaite, "Digital Transformation in Higher Education Institutions as a Driver of Social Oriented Innovations," *Social Innovation in Higher Education: Landscape, Practices, and Opportunities*, 2022, 61–85, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84044-0_4.

[2] Megawati Megawati and Rully Charitas Indra Prahmana, "The Role of Character Education in Supporting Transformative Education in the Digital Era: A Systematic Review: Peran Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Mendukung Pendidikan Transformatif Di Era Digital: Sebuah Tinjauan Sistematis," *Edu Cendikia: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan* 4, no. 03 (2024): 1489–1503, https://doi.org/10.47709/educendikia.v4i03.5337.

[3] Hui-Chin Yeh, Sheng-Shiang Tseng, and Leechin Heng, "Enhancing EFL Students' Intracultural Learning through Virtual Reality," *Interactive Learning Environments* 30, no. 9 (2022): 1609–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2020.1734625.

[4] Maia Chankseliani, Ikboljon Qoraboyev, and Dilbar Gimranova, "Higher Education Contributing to Local, National, and Global Development: New Empirical and Conceptual Insights," *Higher Education* 81, no. 1 (2021): 109–27, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00565-8.

[5] Salsabila Anita Firdaus and Suwendi Suwendi, "Fostering Social Harmony: The Impact of Islamic Character Education in Multicultural Societies," *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan* 17, no. 1 (2025): 942–55, https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v17i1.6579.

[6] Ditya Fajrianti, "Tolong-Menolong Dalam Kebajikan Sebagai Pedoman Masyarakat: Analisis Perspektif Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Didaktik: Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD STKIP Subang* 11, no. 04 (2025): 339–48, https://doi.org/10.36989/didaktik.v11i04.9790.

[7] M Ali Hanafi Nst, Mustapa Mustapa, and Nurdiani Nurdiani, "Konsep Kesejahteraan Sosial Terhadap Prinsip Keadilan Dan Kepedulian Sosial (Studi Kitab Tafsir Al-Munir Karya Wahbah Az-Zuhaili)," *EDU SOCIETY: JURNAL PENDIDIKAN, ILMU SOSIAL DAN PENGABDIAN KEPADA MASYARAKAT* 5, no. 3 (2025): 907–13, https://doi.org/10.56832/edu.v5i3.2190.

[8] Eris Munandar and Nila Nopianti, "Waqf and Its Management Problems (A Study of Qs. Ali Imran (3) Verse 92)," *Al-Risalah: Jurnal Studi Agama Dan Pemikiran Islam* 13, no. 1 (2022): 157–71, https://doi.org/10.34005/alrisalah.v13i1.1782.

[9] A Sulaeman, Makhful Makhrus, and Makhful Makhful, "Filantropi Islam Dalam Upaya Pembentukan Karakter Dengan Sistem Pendidikan Terpadu," *Alhamra Jurnal Studi Islam*, 2021, 123–33, https://doi.org/10.30595/ajsi.v2i2.11701.

One practical manifestation of these values is Islamic philanthropy. Beyond serving as a mechanism for collecting and distributing zakat, infaq, sadaqah, waqf, and humanitarian assistance, philanthropic organizations also provide learning environments where students acquire knowledge through authentic experiences (experiential learning).[10] Participation in program planning, fundraising, field coordination, aid distribution, and program evaluation enables students to develop empathy, leadership, responsibility, collaboration, and sensitivity toward various social issues.[11] Consequently, philanthropy not only benefits the communities receiving assistance but also functions as a medium for character development among the student volunteers involved in these activities.[12]

Based on interviews with the management of Lazismu Sudan, this phenomenon is clearly reflected in Lazismu Sudan, a philanthropic institution operating under the Special Branch Executive of Muhammadiyah (PCIM) Sudan. Since the outbreak of armed conflict in Sudan in 2023, the institution has organized various humanitarian programs, including the collection and distribution of zakat, infaq, and sadaqah, the Ramadan Berkah Program, waqf well-drilling projects, humanitarian assistance for war survivors, qurban distribution, and scholarship programs for Muhammadiyah cadres. [13] A distinctive feature of these programs is the active involvement of Indonesian students, who participate not only as volunteers but also as planners, fundraisers, coordinators, aid distributors, and program evaluators. Their active participation transforms philanthropic activities into authentic learning experiences while simultaneously serving as a platform for character development through humanitarian service.[14]

The process of character formation through such experiences can be effectively explained using Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. According to Mezirow, meaningful learning occurs when individuals transform their frame of reference through five interconnected stages: disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, rational discourse, perspective transformation, and action.[15] Students' direct encounters with poverty, the consequences of armed conflict, and limited access to basic necessities have the potential to create a disorienting dilemma, prompting them to engage in critical reflection, dialogue, perspective transformation, and ultimately sustained social action. Therefore, Transformative Learning Theory provides a highly relevant conceptual framework for understanding how philanthropic engagement contributes to students' character development through profound and meaningful learning experiences.[16]

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[10] Robby Reza Zulfikri et al., *Pengantar Filantropi Islam* (Yayasan Tri Edukasi Ilmiah, 2025).

[11] Yusron Abda'u Ansya, *MUHAMMADIYAH & KESEJAHTERAAN SOSIAL: Menyejahterakan Umat Dalam Membangun Negeri* (Penerbit KBM indonesia, 2026).

[12] Muhammad Baihaqi and Satriyadi Satriyadi, "Evaluasi Kegiatan Kemahasiswaan Untuk Meningkatkan Kompetensi Mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam Di INSAN Binjai," *EDU SOCIETY: JURNAL PENDIDIKAN, ILMU SOSIAL DAN PENGABDIAN KEPADA MASYARAKAT* 5, no. 1 (2025): 1373–86, https://doi.org/10.56832/edu.v5i1.1029.

[13] Ella Lailatul Machmudah, Faiz An Nashrullah, and Sri Wigati, "Pengembangan Wakaf, Infak, Dan Sedekah Sebagai Upaya Pengentasan Kemiskinan: Studi Kasus Masyarakat Muslim Surabaya," *Al-Awqaf: Jurnal Wakaf Dan Ekonomi Islam* 17, no. 1 (2024): 11–22, https://doi.org/10.47411/al-awqaf.v17i1.203.

[14] Kusnadi Kusnadi, "Filantropi Berbasis Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan: Pembelajaran Untuk Memperkuat Karakter Kepedulian Sosial Warga Negara," *Jurnal Civic Hukum* 9, no. 2 (2024), https://doi.org/10.22219/jch.v9i2.32108.

[15] Jack Mezirow, "Transformative Learning Theory," in *Contemporary Theories of Learning* (Routledge, 2018), 114–28, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315147277.

[16] Patricia A Cranton, "Transformative Learning: A Narrative," in *Learning, Design, and Technology: An International Compendium of Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* (Springer, 2023), 1177–89, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17461-7_37.

Recent studies provide an empirical foundation for understanding the relationship between philanthropy, social experiences, and character development. Muslimah and Asrori (2022), in their study of the Lazismu Children's Philanthropic Savings Program in Gresik, demonstrated that the habituation of charitable giving can serve as a means of internalizing Islamic values and fostering a sharing-oriented character among students.[17] In the context of educational philanthropy management, Khaerunnisa et al. (2023) examined the role of Lazismu Umbulharjo in improving educational quality through philanthropic programs and scholarships,[18] while Putri, Dalhar, et al. (2023) discussed the management of Lazismu Yogyakarta as an educational philanthropic institution, particularly in relation to fund management and distribution.[19] Meanwhile, Saputra (2024) examined the implementation of Lazismu's educational programs in the Special Region of Yogyakarta and their contribution to improving educational access and well-being.[20] These studies demonstrate philanthropy's contributions to value internalization, institutional management, and educational development. However, their primary focus does not specifically explain how students' involvement in philanthropic activities becomes a learning experience that transforms perspectives and shapes character through direct engagement in humanitarian activities.

From the perspective of higher education, Lv, Ying, and Chen (2024) investigated the relationships between student volunteering, moral education outcomes, volunteering motivation, and mental health.[21] Holmes, Webb, and Albritton (2022) examined service-learning that integrates academic activities with students' engagement in the community.[22] Meanwhile, Guo (2022), through a meta-analysis of 23 articles involving 2,010 participants, found that reflective interventions had a positive, medium-sized effect on learning outcomes, with the effects also influenced by intervention duration, peer interaction, and reflective activities.[23] Molderez (2021), through a study of the *Students Swap Stuff* project, also demonstrated the potential of action-based transformative learning to foster ecological thinking and responsibility for sustainability.[24] These studies underscore the importance of volunteering, social engagement, reflection, and authentic experiences in the learning process. Nevertheless, their respective focuses differ, ranging from moral education and mental health to service-learning, the effectiveness of reflection, and environmental

[17] Kiki Cahya Muslimah, "Internalisasi Nilai Keislaman Pada Peserta Didik: Melibatkan Program Kaleng Filantropis Cilik Sebagai Kesalehan Sosial Dalam Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Thariqah* 7, no. 1 (2022): 182–98, https://doi.org/10.25299/al-thariqah.2022.vol7(1).9777.

[18] Rina Khaerunnisa, "Enhancing Educational Quality through Strategic Philanthropy : A Case Study of LAZISMU Umbulharjo , Yogyakarta" 1, no. 2 (2023), https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/jiemr.2023.12-06.

[19] Dela Eka Putri A et al., "Management of Educational Philanthropic Institutions in LAZISMU Yogyakarta : A Comprehensive Analysis" 1, no. 2 (2023), https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/jiemr.2023.12-05.

[20] Dendi Saputra, "Implementing Educational Programs by LAZISMU DIY to Enhance Education in Indonesia : A Qualitative Analysis" 2, no. 1 (2024), https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/jiemr.2024.21-10.

[21] Zhiwei Lv, Changtian Ying, and Jiayi Chen, "The Impact of Volunteer Service on Moral Education Performance and Mental Health of College Students," *Plos One* 19, no. 4 (2024): e0294586, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0294586.

[22] Amy Foshee Holmes, Kimberly J Webb, and Bonnie R Albritton, "Connecting Students to Community: Engaging Students through Course Embedded Service-Learning Activities," *The International Journal of Management Education* 20, no. 1 (2022): 100610, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2022.100610.

[23] Lin Guo, "How Should Reflection Be Supported in Higher Education? — A Meta-Analysis of Reflection Interventions," *Reflective Practice* 23, no. 1 (January 2, 2022): 118–46, https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2021.1995856.

[24] Ingrid Molderez, "How Transformative Learning Nurtures Ecological Thinking. Evidence from the Students Swap Stuff Project," *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* 22, no. 3 (2021): 635–58, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-05-2020-0174.

sustainability. The relationship between humanitarian experiences within Islamic philanthropic organizations, critical reflection, social dialogue, perspective transformation, and student character development in the context of humanitarian conflict requires further investigation.

Based on these studies, the research gap lies in the limited integration of Islamic philanthropic practices, student volunteering experiences, and transformative learning processes to explain character development through humanitarian engagement. The novelty of this study lies not merely in its focus on Lazismu Sudan or its application of Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, but in its analysis of the interconnected processes through which humanitarian experiences, critical reflection, social dialogue, perspective transformation, and students' concrete actions within an Islamic philanthropic organization contribute to character development. This study positions students not merely as beneficiaries of learning or participants in volunteer activities, but as active agents who interpret their experiences, reconsider their initial assumptions, interact with others, and respond to humanitarian needs. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze how Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs function as a transformative learning environment for shaping the character of Indonesian students through five analytical dimensions: *disorienting dilemma*, *critical reflection*, *rational discourse*, *perspective transformation*, and *action*. This study is expected to contribute conceptually to the development of Islamic Education by explaining how philanthropic practices can serve as a learning environment that connects Islamic values, social experiences, perspective transformation, and the development of students' character and social responsibility.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to understand transformative learning experiences within Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs. [25] The research was conducted starting on January 22, 2026. The sole informant was an individual who served as Treasurer I of Lazismu Sudan and was also a university student. The informant was selected through purposive sampling due to his involvement in philanthropic activities. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Jack Mezirow's *Transformative Learning Theory* was used to examine the informant's experiences, reflections, changes in perspectives, and actions within the context of philanthropic activities.[26]Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The data were categorized according to Mezirow's theoretical stages and compared with observational findings and documentary evidence. Data trustworthiness was assessed through triangulation and member checking. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent and protecting the informant's confidentiality. Given that the study involved only one informant, the findings describe individual experiences and indications of changes in perspectives and actions rather than establishing character transformation among students in general.[27]

[25] Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2017).
[26] Mudjia Rahardjo, *Studi Kasus Dalam Penelitian Kualitatif: Konsep Dan Prosedurnya* (Malang: UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim, 2017).
[27] M. B. Miles, A. M. Huberman, and J. Saldaña, "Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook (3rd Ed.)" (Sage Publications, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Disorienting Dilemma: Lazismu Sudan's Philanthropic Programs as Experiences that Awaken Students' Critical Awareness

The interview findings indicate that Lazismu Sudan is an Islamic philanthropic institution operating under the Special Branch Leadership of Muhammadiyah (PCIM) Sudan and affiliated with the national Lazismu organization. The institution implements a wide range of humanitarian programs, including the collection and distribution of zakat, infaq, and sadaqah, the Ramadan Berkah Program, waqf well-drilling projects, qurban distribution, and scholarship programs for Muhammadiyah cadres studying in Sudan. Indonesian students are actively involved as both program administrators and implementers, participating in every stage of the programs from planning and fundraising to coordination and aid distribution under the supervision of PCIM Sudan and Lazismu. As explained by the informant:

> *"Lazismu Sudan is a philanthropic institution operating under the Special Branch Leadership of Muhammadiyah (PCIM) Sudan and remains affiliated with Lazismu Central. All of its activities are based in Sudan, focusing on humanitarian services and community empowerment. Our main programs include the collection and distribution of zakat, infaq, and sadaqah, the Ramadan Berkah Program, humanitarian initiatives such as waqf well-drilling projects to provide clean water, qurban distribution during Eid al-Adha, and scholarship programs for Muhammadiyah cadres studying in Sudan."*



Figure 1. Documentation of the QurbanMu Program in Sudan

The researcher's analysis of the documentation published on Lazismu Sudan's official Instagram account indicates that the organization consistently implements a wide range of philanthropic programs addressing humanitarian, educational, religious, and social welfare needs. These initiatives include iftar gatherings, clothing distribution, Qur'an waqf for the Anwar Al-Muhammadiyah Tahfidz Boarding School in Omdurman and Kholwah Waddul Fadni, Ramadan food parcel distribution for Indonesian students in Sudan, waqf-based clean water well projects, medical assistance for Indonesian and international students, the

QurbanMu program in Africa, Arafah fasting iftar, Islamic book studies (*kajian kitab*) and *dauroh* with Sudanese scholars, the Pilar Umat scholarship program to assist Indonesian students with tuition re-registration fees, international *i'tikaf* involving students from various countries, the distribution of *fidyah* and *zakat al-fitr* to Sudanese communities and Indonesian students, the International Ifthar Jama'i program, the Aisyiyah Sudan Tahfidz *Dauroh* during Ramadan, the distribution of medicines for Indonesian students, the Friday Blessing food-sharing program, Takjil on the Road, CareMu donations for victims of the women's dormitory fire at the International University of Africa (IUA), flood relief assistance in Sudan, the Athfaluna program providing baby care packages for Indonesian student families, financial support for the Nusantara Art and Sport Day organized by the Indonesian Students Association (PPPI) Sudan, communal iftar programs at the Markaz and Maududi student dormitories, the distribution of COVID-19 relief donations during Ramadan, and Ramadan gift packages for the Ainul Yaqin Islamic Boarding School serving children with disabilities and individuals with mental disorders in Yogyakarta.

Overall, these diverse philanthropic initiatives demonstrate that Lazismu Sudan functions not only as an Islamic charitable institution responsible for collecting and distributing *zakat*, *infaq*, and *sadaqah*, but also as a humanitarian learning ecosystem that actively engages Indonesian students in planning, fundraising, program implementation, and community service. Through their participation in these activities, students gain firsthand experience in responding to humanitarian challenges while developing leadership, organizational competence, and social responsibility grounded in Islamic values. Consequently, Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs extend beyond the provision of charitable assistance by fostering empathy, collaboration, civic engagement, and transformative learning, thereby serving as an important platform for character development and sustained humanitarian commitment among Indonesian students in Sudan.

Among the various activities, the waqf well-drilling program emerged as the most meaningful experience for the students. Their direct involvement in the field exposed them to the reality that many communities in Sudan continue to struggle with access to clean water. This experience awakened students' awareness that access to basic necessities is not merely a developmental issue but a pressing humanitarian concern requiring collective responsibility and compassion. As explained by the informant:

> *"The program that most profoundly raised students' awareness was the waqf well-drilling initiative. Through this program, students directly witnessed that many communities in Sudan continue to experience severe difficulties in accessing clean water. This experience made them realize that basic necessities such as clean water remain fundamental humanitarian issues that require shared responsibility and concern."*

Beyond expanding their understanding, these experiences also generated a strong emotional impact. Students reported feeling deeply moved when witnessing firsthand the struggles of local communities to obtain clean water, which strengthened their empathy and sense of social responsibility. As explained by the informant:

> *"Students were most emotionally affected when they directly witnessed communities struggling to obtain clean water. This is one of the primary reasons why Lazismu Sudan developed the waqf well-drilling program as a humanitarian response to the challenges faced by the people of Sudan."*



Figure 2. Lazismu Sudan's Waqf Well Construction Project for Sudanese Communities

The findings demonstrate that students' involvement in Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs, particularly the waqf well-drilling initiative, represents a disorienting dilemma, the initial stage of transformative learning in which individuals encounter realities that challenge their previous assumptions and life experiences. From the perspective of Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, direct encounters with communities lacking access to basic necessities disrupted students' existing frames of reference, prompting them to reconstruct their understanding of poverty, inequality, and humanitarian responsibility. Consequently, philanthropic engagement not only broadened their knowledge but also stimulated the development of critical awareness as the foundation for perspective transformation.

These findings are further supported by David A. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which emphasizes that concrete experience constitutes the starting point for meaningful learning. Rather than acquiring humanitarian values solely through classroom instruction, students developed their understanding through direct participation in social service activities.[28] Furthermore, Paulo Freire's concept of critical consciousness (*conscientization*) explains that confronting the realities of social injustice encourages individuals to develop critical awareness that motivates them to engage in social transformation.[29]

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs serve as a transformative learning ecosystem that integrates authentic experiences with the development of students' critical consciousness. Direct encounters with humanitarian challenges not only enhance empathy and social responsibility but also reconstruct students' perspectives on poverty, inequality, and humanitarian obligations.

[28] David A Kolb, Richard E Boyatzis, and Charalampos Mainemelis, "Experiential Learning Theory: Previous Research and New Directions," in *Perspectives on Thinking, Learning, and Cognitive Styles* (Routledge, 2014), 227–47, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410605986.

[29] Tania Ramalho, "Paulo Freire, Communication, and Conscientization for Liberation," in *The Handbook of Global Interventions in Communication Theory* (Routledge, 2022), 269–83, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003043348.

Therefore, within the context of Lazismu Sudan, Islamic philanthropy functions not merely as an instrument of social service but also as an educational medium that cultivates reflective, compassionate, and socially committed individuals capable of becoming agents of social change.

Critical Reflection: Critical Reflection on Philanthropic Experiences

The interview findings reveal that every philanthropic program implemented by Lazismu Sudan concludes with a systematic process of evaluation and reflection as an integral component of organizational learning. The evaluation process includes the preparation of accountability reports, documentation of activities, transparent reporting of fundraising and fund distribution, and an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each program. This process functions not only as a mechanism of organizational accountability but also as a learning opportunity through which students develop an understanding of the values of *amanah* (trustworthiness), transparency, and accountability in managing philanthropic funds. As explained by the informant:

> *"Every program concludes with an evaluation and an accountability report. The evaluation process includes reporting the amount of donations received, documenting the activities that have been carried out, reporting the distribution of funds to beneficiaries, and discussing the strengths and weaknesses of program implementation. The results of these evaluations serve as the basis for improving future programs so that they can generate greater benefits for both the community and the students."*

The findings further indicate that the evaluation process serves as a reflective space in which students reinterpret their experiences throughout their involvement in philanthropic activities. Through direct participation in the management and distribution of zakat, infaq, and sadaqah, students realize that philanthropy is not merely about providing assistance but also about fulfilling moral responsibilities toward donors' trust and the rights of beneficiaries. As explained by the informant:

> *"Through their direct involvement in various activities, students gain a deeper understanding of the conditions faced by communities in need. These experiences cultivate an awareness that philanthropy is not merely about distributing aid but also represents a form of social responsibility and concern for others."*

The findings demonstrate that the evaluation and reflection processes embedded in every philanthropic program at Lazismu Sudan encourage students to engage in critical reflection, a stage in which they reassess the assumptions, values, and beliefs that shape their understanding of philanthropy. From the perspective of Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, critical reflection is a crucial stage that enables individuals to re-examine their existing frame of reference after experiencing a disorienting dilemma. Through program evaluations and the preparation of accountability reports, students do not merely assess the effectiveness of program implementation; they also reconstruct their understanding that philanthropic management is an ethical practice requiring integrity, *amanah*, transparency, accountability, and moral responsibility toward all stakeholders.

These findings are further supported by Donald A. Schön's Reflective Practice, which argues that meaningful learning develops through reflection on experience, enabling individuals to evaluate their actions, improve decision-making, and construct new understandings. Within the context of this study, program evaluation functions as a reflective space that connects students' field experiences with the ethical principles of Islamic

philanthropy.[30] The findings are also consistent with David A. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which identifies reflective observation as a critical stage following concrete experience and preceding the formation of new concepts and perspectives. Accordingly, the evaluation process at Lazismu Sudan not only strengthens organizational governance but also facilitates transformative learning by fostering the internalization of *amanah*, transparency, accountability, and social responsibility.[31]



Figure 3. Distribution of Zakat Al-Fitr by Lazismu Sudan

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the systematic evaluation and reflection processes implemented by Lazismu Sudan constitute an integral component of students' transformative learning. Continuous reflection not only enhances the quality of philanthropic program implementation but also strengthens the internalization of *amanah*, transparency, accountability, and social responsibility as the ethical foundations of Islamic philanthropy. Therefore, philanthropy within Lazismu Sudan functions not only as a mechanism for delivering social services but also as a reflective learning environment that develops students' ethical capacities and prepares them to become individuals of integrity who are committed to humanitarian values and capable of serving as agents of social change.

Rational Discourse: Collaborative Dialogue as a Process of Meaning Construction

The interview findings indicate that learning within Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs extends beyond direct field experience and is further strengthened through dialogue, coordination, and collaboration with various stakeholders. Upon the completion of each program, the management team regularly conducts evaluation meetings to review program implementation, identify challenges, and formulate improvements for future

[30] Magnus Ramage, "Schön, Donald: Learning and Change in His Work–Reflection on Theory and Theory on Reflection," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Organizational Change Thinkers* (Springer, 2021), 1541–55, https://doi.org/Schön, Donald: Learning and change in his work–Reflection on theory and theory on reflection.

[31] Louise Lehane, "Experiential Learning—David A. Kolb," in *Science Education in Theory and Practice: An Introductory Guide to Learning Theory* (Springer, 2025), 235–53, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-81351-1_14.

activities. In addition, Lazismu Sudan collaborates with various institutions in implementing its philanthropic initiatives, particularly in the distribution of *zakat al-fitr* and the Ramadan Program. As explained by the informant:

> *"Lazismu's collaboration with other organizations is most prominent in the zakat al-fitr program. We work together with several philanthropic institutions, the Indonesian Students Association (PPI) in Sudan, and the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI) in Sudan in implementing the zakat al-fitr program."*

The findings further reveal that dialogue takes place not only within the organization itself but also involves students, institutional partners, and beneficiaries (*mustahik*). Feedback, suggestions, and constructive criticism from these stakeholders are incorporated into the evaluation process to improve the quality and effectiveness of Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs. As explained by the informant:

> *"Every suggestion is taken into consideration in the development of Lazismu Sudan's programs. Feedback comes from students, administrators, and beneficiaries (mustahik). All of these inputs are carefully evaluated to improve the quality of services and the effectiveness of Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs."*



Figure 4. Accountability Report (LPJ) of the 1443 AH Ramadan Gift Program, Including Zakat Distribution and Infaq Fund Collection Graphs

The findings demonstrate that collaborative dialogue within Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs provides students with opportunities to construct new understandings of Islamic philanthropy through the exchange of experiences, ideas, and collective decision-making. Through evaluation meetings, inter-organizational coordination, and the incorporation of feedback from multiple stakeholders, students are encouraged to examine their assumptions, consider diverse perspectives, and develop decisions collaboratively. From the perspective of Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, this process represents the stage of rational discourse, in which reflective dialogue enables

individuals to validate newly emerging perspectives through open, reasoned, and evidence-based communication. Consequently, students' perspective transformation is influenced not only by their personal experiences but also by communicative processes that foster shared understandings of philanthropy, leadership, and social responsibility.

These findings are further supported by Jürgen Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action, which argues that mutual understanding is achieved through rational, participatory communication oriented toward consensus building. In the context of this study, evaluation meetings, deliberative discussions, and cross-organizational coordination function as communicative spaces where students present arguments, receive constructive criticism, and collectively evaluate alternative solutions.[32] This perspective is also consistent with Etienne Wenger's Community of Practice, which emphasizes that learning develops through active participation within communities, interaction among members, and the negotiation of meaning based on shared experiences. Accordingly, the dialogue fostered by Lazismu Sudan not only strengthens organizational coordination but also serves as a social learning process that develops students' communication, collaboration, leadership, and decision-making skills.[33]

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that collaborative dialogue within Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs constitutes a vital component of students' transformative learning. Active participation in discussions, evaluations, coordination, and collective decision-making not only strengthens critical thinking and collaborative communication skills but also enhances students' ability to build consensus, solve problems collectively, and internalize the values of Islamic philanthropy within organizational practice. Therefore, rational discourse within Lazismu Sudan functions not merely as a mechanism for program coordination but also as a social learning environment that prepares students to become agents of change capable of addressing humanitarian challenges through participatory dialogue and collaborative action.

Perspective Transformation: Transformation of Students' Values and Character

The interview findings indicate that students' involvement in Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs not only enhances their organizational competencies but also transforms their values, attitudes, and personal character. The informant explained that the most significant character trait developed through participation in philanthropic activities is empathy. This development is largely attributed to the humanitarian orientation of Lazismu Sudan's programs, which provide students with opportunities to interact directly with communities in need. As explained by the informant:

> *"The character that develops the most is empathy. Since almost all Lazismu activities focus on humanitarian services, students become more sensitive to the suffering of others. Their sense of social concern also increases after interacting directly with people who are in need."*

The findings further reveal that these experiences reshape students' perceptions of social responsibility and their roles as Indonesian students pursuing higher education abroad. Their involvement in fundraising and aid distribution enables them to recognize that philanthropy is not merely an act of providing material assistance but also a form of community service and humanitarian engagement. As explained by the informant:

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[32] James J Chriss, "Jurgen Habermas and Theory of Communicative Action," in *Goffman-Handbuch: Leben–Werk–Wirkung* (Springer, 2022), 423–28, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-476-05871-3_56.

[33] Meredith Erickson, Sara K Hosmer, and Martin Scanlan, "Etienne Wenger: A Social Learning Theorist," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Educational Thinkers* (Springer, 2024), 1905–17, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25134-4_215.

"Students gain a deeper understanding of the importance of social concern and responsibility toward society. They realize that, as Indonesian students studying abroad, they have a responsibility to contribute to humanitarian efforts through various philanthropic programs."

Furthermore, these experiences foster a stronger humanitarian consciousness. Students no longer perceive beneficiaries merely as recipients of assistance but rather as fellow human beings who possess dignity and deserve compassion, respect, and support.



Figure 5. Student Volunteers of Lazismu Sudan Participating in the Distribution of Humanitarian Aid to Flood Victims in Sudan

The findings demonstrate that students' participation in Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs brings about fundamental changes in the way they perceive themselves, society, and their social responsibilities. Direct involvement in interacting with beneficiaries, managing fundraising activities, and distributing humanitarian assistance cultivates greater empathy, social awareness, and responsibility. From the perspective of Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, this represents the stage of perspective transformation, characterized by a shift in individuals' frames of reference, including their values, beliefs, and ways of interpreting reality following concrete experiences, critical reflection, and rational discourse. Students no longer regard philanthropy as a temporary charitable activity; instead, they come to understand it as a moral responsibility and a form of community service that becomes an integral part of their social identity.

These findings are further supported by Identity Theory, developed by Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets, which argues that personal identity is continuously constructed and reconstructed through repeated engagement in social roles. In this study, students' involvement as volunteers, program coordinators, and community partners contributes to the development of a new identity characterized by social concern and commitment to humanitarian values.[34] This perspective is also consistent with Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that attitudes and behaviors evolve through direct experience, observation of social environments, and interaction with others. Through these processes, students not only understand the concepts of empathy, amanah (trustworthiness),

[34] P J Burke, *Identity Theory: Revised and Expanded* (Oxford University Press, 2022).

and social responsibility as normative ideals but also internalize them as enduring aspects of their character and everyday behavior.[35]

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs provide an effective learning environment for fostering students' perspective transformation. Direct engagement in various humanitarian activities not only strengthens empathy, social concern, and responsibility but also cultivates a renewed identity as individuals who are committed to community service and humanitarian values. Therefore, within the context of Lazismu Sudan, Islamic philanthropy functions not merely as an instrument for aid distribution and community empowerment but also as a transformative educational medium that develops students' character and social identity, resulting in lasting changes in their values, perspectives, and behaviors as future agents of social change.

A. Action: Implementing Transformation through Social Action

The interview findings indicate that the transformation of students' perspectives and values through Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs is manifested in concrete actions through their sustained involvement in various humanitarian initiatives. Students do not participate in only a single program; rather, they consistently demonstrate a long-term commitment by serving as volunteers, program coordinators, and fundraising organizers. This commitment is reflected in the increasing number of student participants and the continuous growth in donations collected for successive philanthropic programs. As explained by the informant:

> *"Students demonstrate the initiative to remain actively involved in Lazismu's activities. This can be seen from the increasing number of students participating in every program we organize. The amount of donations collected has also continued to increase from year to year for the same programs. This indicates that students' social concern continues to grow, encouraging more students to contribute to humanitarian activities."*

The findings further reveal that Lazismu Sudan consistently provides students with opportunities to assume strategic roles throughout the program management process, including planning, implementation, coordination, and evaluation. Such involvement offers direct learning experiences that strengthen students' leadership abilities, managerial competencies, and commitment to social service. As explained by the informant:

> *"Lazismu provides students with continuous opportunities to participate in every program. By consistently engaging in philanthropic activities, students gain direct experiences that strengthen their social awareness and encourage them to practice humanitarian values in their everyday lives."*

The informant also emphasized that direct interaction with local communities serves as the primary factor motivating students to continue developing philanthropic initiatives. These experiences enable students not only to understand social problems but also to become part of the solution through concrete humanitarian action. As explained by the informant:

> *"Lazismu's programs are highly effective because students are directly involved with the community and witness the conditions of the beneficiaries firsthand. These experiences enable them to genuinely*

[35] Anwar Rumjaun and Fawzia Narod, "Social Learning Theory—Albert Bandura," in *Science Education in Theory and Practice: An Introductory Guide to Learning Theory* (Springer, 2025), 65–82, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-81351-1_5.

understand the hardships faced by the community, motivating them to help, even if only through modest donations."



Figure 6. Student volunteers of Lazismu Sudan Distributing Medical Supplies to Indonesian Students at the International University of Africa (IUA) Dormitory in Sudan

The findings demonstrate that the transformative learning experienced by students through Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs culminates in sustained social action. Students not only experience changes in their perspectives and values but also demonstrate an ongoing commitment to serving as volunteers, organizing fundraising activities, managing programs, and initiating various humanitarian projects. From the perspective of Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, this represents the action stage, in which newly developed perspectives are translated into consistent behaviors and practical actions. Transformative learning is considered complete only when individuals not merely revise their assumptions but also implement their new perspectives in everyday life. In the context of this study, the internalization of Islamic philanthropic values motivates students to regard humanitarian service as an integral component of their identity and social responsibility. Consequently, the transformation extends beyond cognitive and affective dimensions to become sustained social practice.

These findings are further supported by Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which explains that human behavior develops through reciprocal interactions among personal experiences, environmental influences, and individuals' beliefs in their own capabilities (self-efficacy). Repeated involvement in managing philanthropic programs enhances students' confidence to assume greater responsibilities in humanitarian activities while strengthening their commitment to serving society.[36] The findings are also consistent with Icek Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, which argues that behavior is influenced by

[36] Rumjaun and Narod.

individuals' attitudes toward the behavior, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioral control. In this study, students' positive experiences, organizational support, and the collaborative culture fostered by Lazismu Sudan strengthen their intentions to maintain long-term involvement in philanthropic activities.[37]

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs successfully integrate transformative learning with sustained social action. The values of empathy, social responsibility, humanitarian concern, and accountability developed throughout students' participation do not remain at the level of individual awareness but are translated into active engagement as volunteers, program managers, and leaders of various philanthropic initiatives. Therefore, within the context of Lazismu Sudan, Islamic philanthropy functions not only as a mechanism for delivering humanitarian assistance but also as a model of experiential transformative learning that promotes lasting behavioral change, strengthens students' social leadership, and ensures the sustainability of humanitarian movements through the active participation of young people.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the transformative learning process within Lazismu Sudan's philanthropic programs using Jack Mezirow's *Transformative Learning Theory*. Based on the informant's experiences, the process was examined through Mezirow's five stages. The *disorienting dilemma* stage relates to experiences of encountering humanitarian issues through philanthropic activities, while *critical reflection* refers to the informant's reflection on these experiences and social responsibilities. The *rational discourse* stage concerns dialogue and coordination in implementing philanthropic activities. Furthermore, *perspective transformation* can be identified when evidence demonstrates changes in the informant's perspectives, while *action* is reflected in actual behaviors reported or observed during participation in the program. Thus, the research objective of examining transformative learning experiences was addressed through the five-stage framework. However, each stage can only be considered to have occurred to the extent that it is supported by the available interview, observation, and documentary data.

Theoretically, this study demonstrates the relevance of *Transformative Learning Theory* for analyzing learning experiences in the context of Islamic philanthropy and Islamic Religious Education. Practically, philanthropic activities have the potential to serve as experiential learning opportunities that provide space for reflection, dialogue, and social engagement. Such experiences may support the learning of values including empathy, *amanah* (trustworthiness), responsibility, and social concern. Nevertheless, this potential should not be interpreted as definitive evidence of successful character transformation, as the study does not provide sufficient evidence to establish comprehensive changes in character.

This study is limited by its reliance on one informant, who served as Treasurer I of Lazismu Sudan and was also a university student, and its focus on a single organizational context. Consequently, the findings primarily describe individual experiences and cannot be generalized to the broader student population. Future research should involve student participants, program administrators, and other relevant stakeholders. Longitudinal studies comparing participants' perspectives, attitudes, and actions before and after their involvement in philanthropic programs are also needed to assess changes more thoroughly. With more diverse and sustained data, future research could more rigorously examine how

[37] Constanze Rossmann, "Ajzen (1985): A Theory of Planned Behavior BT - Schlüsselwerke Für Die Strategische Kommunikationsforschung," ed. Olaf Hoffjann and Swaran Sandhu (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2024), 207–17, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-45292-6_18.

and to what extent the five stages of transformative learning occur in Islamic philanthropic activities.

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