Zakat as *Al-Harakah al-Jawhariyyah*: Reconstruction of the Ontology of Islamic Education Based on Sadra's Metaphysics

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Abstract: *The general understanding of Islamic philanthropy, especially zakat, is often limited to its function of material redistribution, thereby neglecting its potential as a means of more fundamental educational transformation. This study aims to analyze the BEBEZA (Berdaya Bersama Zakat) Program in Sukabumi, one of Regencies in West Java, as an ontological manifestation of Islamic Religious Education in the process of strengthening mustahiq. This study attempts to connect philosophical discourse with empirical practice through an in-depth study of the transformation mechanisms that occur in mustahiq, which are understood not merely as economic empowerment, but as a process of enhancing self-quality existence. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, and the analysis is conducted through the lens of Mulla Sadra's Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah, specifically the concepts of the principal of existence (Aṣālat al-Wujūd), the gradation of existence (Tashkīk al-Wujūd), and substantial movement (Al-Ḥarakah al-Jawhariyyah). Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document study, then analyzed thematically and interpretively, accompanied by source triangulation to increase validity. The results show that the BEBEZA Program effectively triggers substantial movement in the mustahiq. The intervention not only has an impact on increasing economic capacity, but also improves the quality of their existence, which is reflected in the growth of self-confidence, initiative, social involvement, and spiritual deepening. This study concludes that a holistically designed Islamic philanthropy model can serve as a transformative educational instrument for shaping empowered and independent individuals (Insān al-Kāmil), as well as offering an alternative philosophical framework for the design of religious-based empowerment programs.*
Keywords: *Mulla Sadra's Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah, BEBEZA (Berdaya Bersama Zakat) Program, Islamic Philanthropy, Islamic Education*

A. Introduction

Poverty and inequality remain paradoxes in the 21st century, a persistent challenge despite the rollout of various global social and economic development programs. In this context, the tradition of Islamic philanthropy, particularly through structured mechanisms such as *zakat*, offers tremendous institutional potential that often remains untapped. This potential lies not

only on the scale of funds that can be raised, but also in the deep philosophical framework that underlies it, which directly links the purification of wealth, the cleansing of the soul, and social justice. Ironically, however, common perceptions and practices in the field are often trapped in a narrow perspective, reducing *zakat* solely to a function of material redistribution or consumptive charity. This mechanistic view ignores the far more fundamental transformative dimension inherent in Islamic teachings, a critical weakness that has also come under sharp scrutiny in global philanthropy studies.

International discourse distinguishes between short-term charitable assistance models and long-term capacity building models.[1] Existing studies have shown the positive impact of *zakat* on microeconomic welfare indicators, but in his works, Malik asserts that this immediate impact is not enough. He argues that *Zakat* institutions must be facilitated to carry out constructive distribution of wealth that can systematically overcome structural problems such as illiteracy, unemployment, and relative deprivation.[2] This is where a significant epistemological void lies. The striking intellectual separation of *zakat* studies in the "economic box," Islamic education studies in the "school box," and empowerment studies in the "secular development box" is no coincidence. Hughes and Siddiqui explain that this is a consequence of the development of a global philanthropy discourse originating from a "secularized" Christian tradition, which is inherently separate from the Islamic legal and social framework.[3] As a result, the broad practice of Islamic charity, which encompasses social, ethical, and legal visions, becomes obscured and trapped in definitions that overly emphasize donors and funds.

To overcome this 21st-century paradox, we need not only to optimize fundraising, but more than that, we must break down these disciplinary walls and understand *zakat* as a holistic philosophical system for true justice and empowerment. Although there are many separate studies on the economics of *zakat* and Islamic educational theory, there is a significant gap in connecting the two philosophically. A fundamental question that remains unanswered is: "How can Islamic philanthropic practices ontologically be considered an educational process that transforms the essence of individuals, not just their economic conditions?" There is a fundamental debate regarding the separation between ritual worship (including paying *zakat*) and its socio-economic impact. Others argue that the main purpose of rituals is to achieve holistic spiritual and social transformation, a debate that often arises in journals such as *Islamic Studies* that examine the relationship between metaphysics and social practices in Islam.

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[1] Marliza Oktapiani, "Zakat and Ramadan Philanthropy: An Educational Policy Model for Social Empowerment," *Indonesian Journal of Studies on Humanities, Social Sciences and Education* 2, no. 1 (March 2025): 33–52, https://doi.org/10.54783/x7gtbr35.

[2] Bilal Ahmad Malik, "Philanthropy in Practice: Role of Zakat in the Realization of Justice and Economic Growth," *International Journal of Zakat* 1, no. 1 (November 2016): 64–77, https://doi.org/10.37706/ijaz.v1i1.7.

[3] Yasmien Khaled, "Shariq A. Siddiqui, Rafeel Wasif, & Micah A. Hughes: Understanding Muslim Philanthropy," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 36, no. 2 (April 2025): 283–84, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-024-00711-1.

Studies on *zakat* and the empowerment of *mustahiq* have been conducted by various researchers, both in the context of economics, social issues, and public policy. However, most of these studies still follow a technocratic paradigm that focuses on economic impacts such as increased income, changes in consumption patterns, and business growth. Although important, this approach has not been able to explain the dynamics of the inner and existential changes experienced by *mustahiq* during the empowerment process. In other words, the aspect of self-transformation as a subject of education in the Islamic perspective has not received proportional attention.

In Islamic Education literature, the topic of human transformation is discussed more in the context of formal learning in educational institutions, rather than in the context of social empowerment through *zakat*. Meanwhile, studies on Islamic philanthropy tend to discuss aspects of fiqh, management, or the administrative effectiveness of programs. These two fields of study run independently without an epistemological bridge connecting them. Thus, there is an important gap in the absence of studies that view *Zakat* as an ontological education mechanism—that is, a means of substantial and existential human formation. Furthermore, very few studies utilize the framework of Mulla Sadra's *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* Philosophy to analyze the empowerment of *mustahiq*. In fact, this philosophy provides a powerful analytical tool for understanding human change through the concepts of *Aṣālat al-Wujūd* (principality of existence), *Tashkīk al-Wujūd* (gradation of existence), and *Al-Ḥarakah al-Jawhariyyah* (substantial movement). No previous research has examined productive *zakat* as a trigger for substantial movement within *mustahiq*.

This study fills a fundamental research gap regarding the absence of a solid ontological basis in explaining the phenomenon of *mustahiq* transformation in productive *zakat* programs. The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to reconstruct the Ontology of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) by establishing the Philosophy of *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* as its main foundation. Unlike previous studies that separate the dimensions of education, economics, and philosophy, this study argues that productive *zakat* must be understood as an ontological educational instrument that triggers the evolution of human nature.
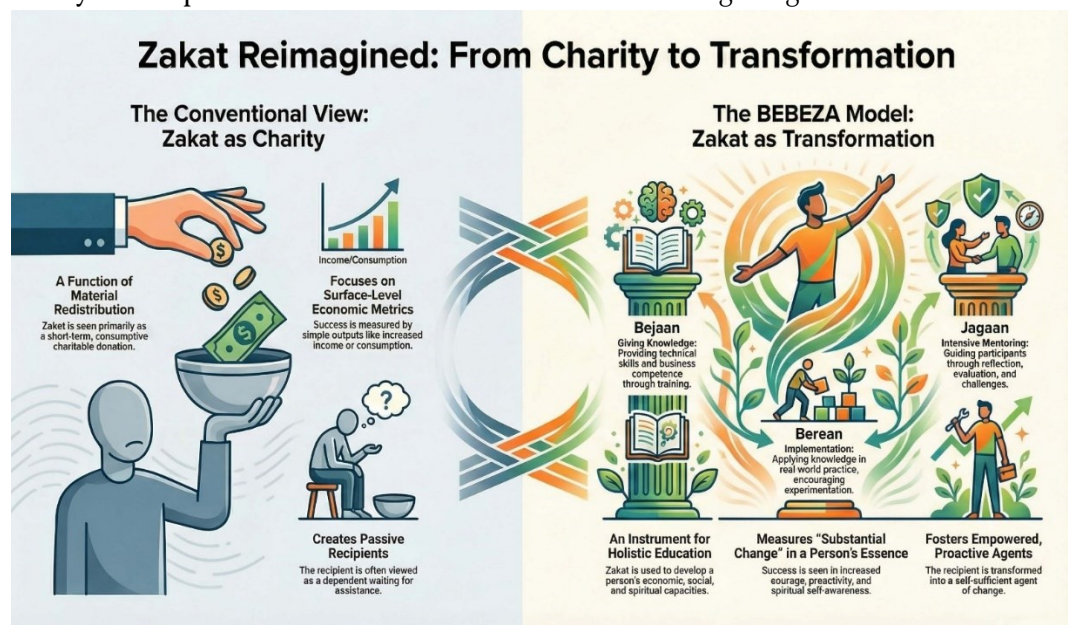
In this reconstruction framework, PAI Ontology and Mulla Sadra's Philosophy are not positioned as two separate entities, but rather as one epistemic unity. The goal of Islamic Education, namely the formation of *Insān al-Kāmil*, can only be fully understood through the lens of Substantial Movement (*Al-Ḥarakah al-Jawhariyyah*). Therefore, this study views the educational process not merely as a transfer of knowledge or a change in behavior (accident), but as a journey of transformation of being (*takwīn al-wujūd*) that necessarily involves a change in the substance of the soul.

The BEBEZA program in Sukabumi Regency is positioned as an empirical context to test this ontological construct. The findings of the study show that there is complete coherence between Sadra's metaphysical principles and empowerment practices in the field. The

transformation of *mustahiq* in this program is a concrete manifestation of the Gradation of Existence (*Tashkīk al-Wujūd*), in which *mustahiq* move from a "weak" (dependent/passive) degree of existence to a "stronger" (independent/creative/giving) degree of existence.

The beneficiaries' courage to take business risks and integrate spiritual values into the economy is not merely a psychological phenomenon, but ontological evidence of the strengthening of the Principle of Existence (*Aṣālat al-Wujūd*) within them. Thus, productive *zakat* in the BEBEZA Program functions as the locus (place) of *Al-Ḥarakah al-Jawhariyyah*. This proves that *zakat*-based economic empowerment, if carried out with the right ontological framework, is a transformative educational practice that touches the deepest structure of human existence, not merely a material intervention.

The synthesis presented above can be seen in the following image:

Zakat, as part of Islamic teachings, is part of this educational ecosystem because it purifies the soul (*tazkiyah*), regulates social relations, and shapes character.[4] Thus, *zakat* can be understood as an ontological educational instrument, not merely an instrument of economic distribution. The philosophy of *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* offers a deep metaphysical framework for understanding human change. Three main concepts form the basis of this research. First, *Aṣālat al-Wujūd* (Principle of Existence) is the most fundamental reality, while essence is derivative.[5] Human change in empowerment is not only a change in behavior, but also an improvement in the quality of existence reflected in courage, fighting spirit, spirit of change, and spiritual

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[4] Mohammad Ashfaq Khan, "Zakat and Good Character: Purifying Wealth and Heart in the Prophet's Teachings," *Contemporary Journal of Social Science Review* 3, no. 1 (2025): 138–47.

[5] Muhammad Faiq and Ibnu Farhan, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Ontology: The Fundamentality of Existence Over Essence," *KACA (Karunia Cahaya Allah): Jurnal Dialogis Ilmu Ushuluddin* 13, no. 2 (August 2023): 169–82, https://doi.org/10.36781/kaca.v13i2.476.

awareness. Second, *Tashkīk al-Wujūd* (Gradation of Existence), human existence has levels.[6] *Mustahiq* is at one level of intensity of existence, and through the process of true empowerment, he can ascend to a higher level of being and become more capable, more confident, more independent, and third, *Al-Ḥarakah al-Jawhariyyah* (Substantial Movement). Humans are entities that move substantially. Real change is not only at the physical or economic level, but also at the level of self-substance, namely the courage to make decisions, the ability to take responsibility, the quality of spirituality, and life vision.[7] Meanwhile, Islamic philanthropy, especially *zakat*, has two dimensions, namely (1) *Tazkiyah* (purification of the soul, spirituality) and (2) *I'mār al-ardh* (social and economic development). The conventional approach often emphasizes only the material aspect. However, *zakat* has the potential to be a mechanism for spiritual-social education that can change a person's perspective, way of life, and way of acting.

Productive *zakat* in the context of BEBEZA is providing capital, training, and mentoring, instilling religious values such as gratitude, trustworthiness, and hard work; encouraging *mustahiq* to break out of dependency; and facilitating existential transformation. Thus, *zakat* becomes a medium of education that works on the ontological level, not just the economic level. This study is expected to show that the BEBEZA Program functions as more than just an economic empowerment program. This program serves as a catalyst for substantial movement among *mustahiq*, actively increasing the intensity of their existence from a level of dependency to independence and piety. Overall, this study will offer a new philosophical framework for designing and evaluating Islamic philanthropy programs, placing them as an integral part of a transformative Islamic Education project.

B. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological-philosophical case study design. This approach was chosen because the purpose of the study is not merely to describe the social phenomenon of the BEBEZA program, but to reveal the ontological structure behind the transformation of *mustahiq*. This design allows researchers to interpret empirical data (phenomena) using the universal lens of *Muta'āliyah* Wisdom Philosophy, specifically to trace the footsteps of *Al-Ḥarakah al-Jawhariyyah* (substantial movement) in human experience.

The research was conducted at the location of the BEBEZA (Berdaya Bersama *Zakat*) program managed by BAZNAS Sukabumi Regency. Informants were selected using purposive sampling with a maximum variation strategy. To avoid glorification bias and ensure data dialectics, informants did not only consist of economically "successful" *mustahiq*, but also included: (1) *Mustahiq* who experienced significant transformation (as a representation of

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[6] Redi Irawan, Agiel Laksamana Putra, and Hisam Sidqi, "Examining the Concept of Unity of Existence According to the Perspective of Islamic Philosophers and Mystics," *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2025): 96–112.

[7] Zubaidah Yusuf, "Trans-Substantial Motion (Al-Harakah Al-Jawhariyyah) Toward a Holistic Evolutionary Theory Traditional Contribution to Islamic Philosophy of Science," *Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi Dan Perubahan Sosial* 2, no. 2 (2015): 18–33.

existential upward movement), (2) *Mustahiq* who experienced stagnation or failure (as material for ontological barrier/hijab analysis), and (3) Program assistants and BAZNAS managers. The number of informants was determined based on the principle of theoretical saturation, where data collection was stopped when no new ontological pattern variations were found.

Data collection was carried out using three main techniques focused on exploring existential depth:

1. In-depth Philosophical Interview: The questionnaire was designed to penetrate the surface layer of the phenomenon. The researchers did not only ask about income increases but also explored how *mustahiq* interpreted their existence when receiving vs. giving and tracked the transition from conceptual knowledge (*'lmu ḥuṣūlī*) about trade to inner awareness (*'ilm ḥudhūrī*) that was integrated with character.

2. Participatory Observation: Conducted to observe the "movements" of beneficiaries in responding to business challenges. The focus of observation is to distinguish between mechanical behavioral changes (technical memorization) and spontaneous-intuitive changes (reflection of the soul's substance).

3. Documentation Study: Examining training modules and progress reports to map the program curriculum as a matter of preparing for change.

Data analysis is carried out through an Ontological Reduction approach. Unlike conventional thematic analysis, the analysis stage in this study involves rigorous screening using Mulla Sadra's analytical tools:

1. Categorization of Accidents vs. Substance: Data on changes in *mustahiq* were critically sorted to distinguish between changes in nature/*a'radh* (e.g., financial record-keeping skills) and changes in substance/*jawhar* (e.g., a change in mentality from asking to giving).

2. Identification of Causality: Analyzing the role of the BEBEZA Program not as *'Illah Fā'iliyyah* (Efficient Cause because this role essentially belongs to God), but as *'Illah Mu'iddah* (Preparatory Cause) which facilitates the material/spirit of the *mustahiq* to receive an abundance of existence (*faydh*).

3. Interpretation of Gradations of Existence: Interpreting the position of *mustahiq* in the *Tashkīk al-Wujūd* scheme and identifying the limits of their achievements—whether they have reached the level of *Insān al-Kāmil* or are only in the early stages of self-purification (takhalli).

C. Results and Discussion

Findings from the field consistently show that the BEBEZA Program in Sukabumi Regency has gone beyond the conventional material assistance function and serves as a catalyst for holistic transformation in the beneficiaries. The following discussion is divided into three main items to

explain how these results answer the research questions, provide philosophical interpretations, and compare them with relevant studies.

Strengthening *Mustahiq* as the Realization of Islamic Education Ontology

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a deep philosophical framework, viewing humans not merely as biological or social entities, but as spiritual beings who have the potential to continue evolving towards perfection, or what is called *Insān al-Kāmil*.[8] This journey is not instantaneous, but rather through a process of transformation of essence known as tahawwul dhati.[9] This view places education as the main means to shape (*takwīn*) all aspects of human life, namely physical, intellectual, and spiritual, not merely as a transfer of knowledge.[10] In this context, community empowerment, especially for *mustahiq*, can be seen not only as an economic intervention, but as a concrete ontological educational practice. Conventional approaches to empowerment are often trapped in materialistic reductionism, where poverty is seen only as a problem of economic deprivation (*qat'iyyah*) and the spiritual and psychological aspects (*thawabiyyah*) are ignored.[11] Such models often fail to create sustainable change because they do not touch on the root of the problem, namely individual mindsets and frames of reference. As researched by Ali and Haji (2019) in the International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, empowerment programs that only focus on capital assistance without character and mental guidance can create dependency and fail to build long-term economic resilience. This is the gap that PAI ontology-based program models attempt to fill.[12]

The ontology of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in this study is constructed on the foundation of *Muta'āliyah* Wisdom Philosophy, which views humans not merely as static entities, but as beings that are constantly moving (becoming) towards perfection. In Mulla Sadra's view, the goal of this education is to approach the degree of *Insān al-Kāmil*, the highest existential position in the gradation of being (*Tashkīk al-Wujūd*). This journey requires a transformation of the self (*tahawwul dhati*), in which knowledge does not stop at cognitive information (*'lmu ḥuṣūlī*), but is internalized into inner awareness (*'ilm ḥudhūrī*) that changes the substance of the soul of the actor. In this context, the empowerment of *mustahiq* is no longer seen as an economic intervention per se, but as an effort to provide the material conditions that enable existential upward movement. The conventional approach often gets caught up in materialistic reductionism viewing poverty only as a deficit of assets (*qat'iyyah*) and ignoring the deficit of

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[8] M. Amin Abdullah, "Islamic Religious Education Based on Religious Intersubjectivity: Philosophical Perspectives and Phenomenology of Religion," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 19, no. 1 (2022): 141–64.

[9] Cyrus Ali Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics: Beauty, Love, and the Human Form in the Writings of Ibn'Arabi and'Iraqi* (Univ of South Carolina Press, 2013).

[10] Korompis Rangga Aldo and Kasingku Juwinner Dedy, *The Role of Education in Developing Spirit*, 2023.

[11] Sarton Road and Clayton Vic, "Holistic Understanding of Poverty," *Accir: Holistic Understanding of Poverty*, n.d.

[12] Wimmy Haliim and Andy Ilman Hakim, "Ketergantungan Masyarakat Miskin Dan Dilema Kebijakan Sosial: Studi Pada Implementasi Bantuan Sosial Program Keluarga Harapan," *Jurnal Kebijakan Pemerintahan*, December 28, 2024, 97–112, https://doi.org/10.33701/jkp.v7i2.4616.

meaning (*thawabiyyah*). As criticized by Ali and Haji (2019), capital assistance without an ontological foundation only creates dependency, because it only touches on the accidental aspect (property ownership) without touching on the substance (mentality).

Based on field findings, the BEBEZA program has emerged as an example of implementation that transcends these conventional boundaries. This program has not only succeeded in increasing the economic capacity of *mustahiq*, but more importantly, it has driven a significant process of *tahawwul dhati*. This change is manifested in five crucial aspects: (a) a shift from a passive mindset to a proactive and creative one; (b) increased self-awareness of potential and responsibility; (c) work motivation that is no longer tied to merely fulfilling needs, but to self-actualization; (d) a reinterpretation of the role of breadwinner as part of one's life mission; and (e) the internalization of the concept of *amānah* (trust) in work as a form of comprehensive worship. The transformation experienced by BEBEZA beneficiaries is a concrete realization of the concept of *takwīn al-wujūd* in PAI ontology. Education, in this perspective, is the process of shaping a complete human being.[13] As emphasized by Hanafi (2021) in the Journal of Islamic Studies, the ultimate goal of Islamic education is to shape individuals who are able to integrate knowledge, faith, and deeds in perfect harmony.[14] BEBEZA, through its design, functions as "ontological non-formal education" that does not teach skills separately from values, but shapes them simultaneously. Business training becomes meaningful when accompanied by work ethics derived from sharia, so that economic profit is no longer the main goal, but rather a means to achieve greater good.

To achieve its ontological goal a fundamental change in the way people think and act BEBEZA Sukabumi Regency has designed a holistic and integrated mechanism. This mechanism is based on three main pillars:

a. Pillar of Knowledge (Bejaan). The first stage begins with the provision of technical skills and business competencies through training. In Sukabumi, this process of imparting knowledge is specifically called 'Bejaan', which serves as a strong foundation for participants to understand the ins and outs of the entrepreneurial world.

b. Berean Pillar (Implementation). After acquiring knowledge, participants enter the Berean stage. This is the phase where theoretical knowledge is tested in real practice. Participants are encouraged to take bold steps, experiment, and apply the '*Bejaan*' they have received in their respective business contexts.

c. Pillar of Jagaan (Intensive Mentoring). The transformation process would not be complete without guidance. Therefore, BEBEZA provides intensive mentoring interactions. The role of the mentor here is as a facilitator in '*Jagaan*' a process of

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[13] Jojo M. Fung, *Sacred Sustainability, Polyhedral Christianity and Cosmic Challenges* (Taylor & Francis, 2025).

[14] Arhanuddin Salim et al., *Moderasi Beragama: Implementasi Dalam Pendidikan, Agama Dan Budaya Lokal*, 2023.

guidance and critical reflection that helps participants evaluate their actions, learn from failures, and strengthen their courage to keep moving forward.[15]

These three pillars, *Bejaan*, *Berean*, and *Jagaan*, work synergistically. *Bejaan* provides the map, Berean is the journey itself, and '*Jagaan*' is the guide that ensures learners stay on the right path of transformation, so that ontological goals can be achieved to the fullest. This process is in line with Mezirow's (1997) theory of transformative learning, which has been adapted in many studies in international journals, where fundamental perspective changes occur through reflective dialogue supported by a safe environment.[16] The integration of economic and spiritual dimensions in the BEBEZA program is the key to its success as an arena for existential education. *Mustahiq* learns that earning a living is not a worldly activity separate from worship, but rather an inseparable unity.[17] Research by Beik and Arsyianti (2020) shows that understanding the concept of *maqāṣid al-sharīah* (sharia objectives) in economic activities can increase the halalness and blessings of a business, which in turn has an impact on the sustainability and life satisfaction of business actors. The way BEBEZA *mustahiq* understand *amānah* as worship directly elevates their work from a mere profession to a spiritual calling.[18]

Therefore, the BEBEZA Program has proven that strengthening *mustahiq* can and should be formulated as a realization of the ontology of Islamic Religious Education. This program effectively becomes a social laboratory where the concepts of *tahawwul dhati* and *takwīn al-wujūd* are realized in practice. Thus, BEBEZA is not merely an economic program, but a transformative existential educational arena, where individuals are not only freed from the shackles of material poverty, but also guided to climb the spiritual ladder towards perfection as *Insān al-Kāmil*. This model offers a highly relevant blueprint for redesigning empowerment programs at various levels, shifting the focus from short-term benefits to the formation of holistic and empowered human capital.

The Role of Productive *Zakat* as a Transformative Philanthropic Practice

The BEBEZA program represents a significant evolution in Islamic philanthropy practices, moving away from the paradigm of mere giving (charity) towards a holistic process of human transformation. In the conventional framework of philanthropy, there is often a distance between the giver (*muzakki*) and the recipient (*mustahiq*), where interaction stops at a temporary transfer of material goods. In contrast, BEBEZA practices philanthropy as an educational relationship that aims to build the capacity and dignity of *mustahiq*. From an ontological perspective, this approach emphasizes that *zakat* not only serves as material to fulfill

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[15] Unang Sudarma, *BEBEZA (Berdaya Bersama Zakat)*, 1st ed. (Sukabumi: Vinawa Press, n.d.).

[16] Edward W. Taylor, "Building upon the Theoretical Debate: A Critical Review of the Empirical Studies of Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory," *Adult Education Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1997): 34–59.

[17] Siti Nurhaliza et al., "The Role of Zakat, Waqf, and Islamic Business in Sustainable Economic Development: A Review of Funding and Fund Provision Models," *Journal of Economics and Business* 3, no. 1 (2025): 60–78.

[18] Darihan Mubarak et al., "Maqasid-Shariah And Well-Being: A Systematic," *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Islamic Economics*, 2022, 978–629.

physical needs, but also as maddah (material) prepared to trigger the potential of the *mustahiq*'s soul so that they are ready to accept a new, more independent form of existence. This approach is in line with criticism of unsustainable humanitarian models, where aiding without guidance can create structural dependency, as revealed in studies on the effectiveness of development assistance.[19]

Concrete evidence of this transformation is clearly seen in field data. Beneficiaries who may have previously been in a cycle of economic resignation are gradually showing greater work discipline. This change is not merely an increase in productivity, but a fundamental indication of a shift in mindset from recipient to actor. However, philosophical analysis must carefully distinguish between these types of change. Mastering technical skills such as "being able to trade" is only an accidental change (*'aradh*) or an attached quality. The real transformation namely *Al-Ḥarakah al-Jawhariyyah* occurs when 'awareness of independence' is no longer conceptual knowledge (*'lmu ḥuṣūlī*) but is present as a reality of the self (*'ilm ḥudhūrī*) that changes their inner structure. They no longer wait but move. Furthermore, the process of learning simple management skills, such as financial record-keeping and capital management, provides them with the tools to control their economic future. As researched by Siti Mashitoh Hamzah et al. (2021) in the Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research, empowerment coupled with sharia financial training significantly improves the welfare and economic independence of recipients, as they can make more rational and responsible business decisions.[20]

The transformative aspect of BEBEZA does not stop at the individual level but extends to the social sphere through the involvement of *mustahiq* in small business communities. This is the creation of social capital, which is crucial. The community serves as a forum for sharing knowledge, supporting each other in facing challenges, and creating collective opportunities that would be impossible to achieve individually. However, the dynamics in the field show anomalies. Not all beneficiaries have successfully made this transition smoothly. A small number of beneficiaries have experienced stagnation or reverted to their old habits. In the view of *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah*, this failure shows that the environment and capital are only external factors; transformation requires the readiness of the recipient's capacity (*qabiliyyah*), which is free from the material veils that have thickened in the soul. This phenomenon is in line with Robert Putnam's (2000) findings, which emphasize that trust and networks within communities are valuable assets that drive economic progress and social stability.[21] In the context of BEBEZA, the business community becomes a supportive ecosystem that lifts beneficiaries out of economic and psychological isolation.

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[19] Wahyu Hidayat Riyanto, *Model Kelembagaan Daerah Dalam Penanganan Kemiskinan* (UMMPress, 2025).

[20] Bismi Khalidin, "Economic Empowerment with Islamic Economics-Based Instruments," *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research* 7, no. 3 (2024): 18–27.

[21] Robert D. Putnam, *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society* (Oxford University Press, 2002).

The core of the transformation driven by BEBEZA lies in intensive spiritual guidance. This is the main difference from secular empowerment programs. Through these sessions, beneficiaries are encouraged to connect every aspect of their business from recording finances to serving customers with the value of worship. This is where the ontological role of the BEBEZA Program must be placed proportionally. This program is not *'Illah Fā'iliyyah* (Efficient Cause) that creates spiritual change because the true Giver of Form is only God but functions as *'Illah Mu'iddah* (Preparatory Cause). Spiritual guidance prepares the inner condition of the *mustahiq* so that they are worthy of receiving the abundance of the light of existence (*faydh al-wujūd*) in the form of a strong mentality. This concept elevates work from merely seeking sustenance (*kasb*) to a spiritual mission to manage God's gifts as best as possible.

Research by Haithem Kader in Human Well-Being, Morality and the Economy: An Islamic Perspective highlights that when economic activities are imbued with Islamic spiritual values, workers' intrinsic motivation increases, which in turn has an impact on the sustainability and blessings of the business.[22] The combination of behavioral change, capacity building, community building, and spiritual guidance clearly shows that BEBEZA practices philanthropy as empowerment, not just charity. Charity is vertical and temporary, while empowerment is horizontal and sustainable, aiming to eradicate the root causes of poverty by building strength from within. This program does not give fish but teaches how to fish while instilling the understanding that fishing is part of worship.[23]

BEBEZA's approach is very much in line with the philosophical objectives of *zakat* in Islam, namely *tathīr wa tazkiyah*. Tathir is the purification of wealth for the giver (*muzakki*), while tazkiyah is the purification and growth of the self for the recipient (*mustahiq*). The BEBEZA program focuses on the realization of *tazkiyah*. *Mustahiq* are not only freed from material deprivation, but also "purified" from a mindset of resignation, laziness, and pessimism, then "nurtured" into disciplined, independent, and optimistic individuals. However, this achievement should be understood as the first step (*takhalli*) in a long journey towards *Insān al-Kāmil*. The change in *mustahiq* is initial evidence of substantial movement, but ontological perfection still requires a continuous process of refinement beyond mere economic independence. This is the essence of ontological education: changing one's true nature (*tahawwul dhati*) to achieve the best version of humanity. In conclusion, the BEBEZA Program offers a blueprint or model for the implementation of Islamic philanthropy that is highly relevant to the modern era. By integrating economic intervention, social development, and spiritual guidance, this program successfully embodies the true essence of *zakat* and almsgiving as tools for comprehensive human transformation. This model proves that Islamic philanthropy, when understood and implemented holistically, is not only about reducing poverty, but about restoring human dignity and potential, which is the pinnacle of the ontological education mission itself.

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[22] Haithem Kader, "Human Well-Being, Morality and the Economy: An Islamic Perspective," *Islamic Economic Studies* 28, no. 2 (2021): 102–23.

[23] Shonali Banerjee, Anne-Meike Fechter, and Thabani Mutambasere, "Horizontal Development: Shifting Power and Privilege in Aid," in *Horizontal Development* (Bristol University Press, 2025).

The Existential Transformation of *Mustahiq* in the Perspective of *Muta'āliyah* Wisdom

This study found that empowering *mustahiq* through the BEBEZA Program is not merely a socio-economic intervention but can be deeply understood as a process of substantial movement or *Al-Ḥarakah al-Jawhariyyah*, a key concept in Mulla Sadra's philosophy. Field findings consistently show fundamental changes in the following aspects that describe the evolution of the *mustahiq*'s true nature.

First, there was a significant increase in the aspect of existential courage. Beneficiaries, who were previously stuck in a comfort zone of dependency, gradually showed the courage to make measured business decisions, take risks, and break out of the cycle of resignation. This behavioral change is not merely an increase in self-confidence, but a manifestation of *Aṣālat al-Wujūd* (principiality of existence). In this perspective, the quality of a person's existence increases when they are active and becomes the cause (*'illat*) of their actions, not merely the effect. Their courage to act is concrete evidence that their existence has become more "real" and substantive. This phenomenon is in line with the concept of psychological empowerment developed by Spreitzer (1995), which states that when individuals feel a sense of control, competence, and meaning in their work, it encourages them to take initiative and act proactively.[24]

However, it should be noted that this courage does not appear instantly. In some cases of *mustahiq* who experience stagnation, it was found that 'capital assistance' alone was not enough to trigger this existential courage. This confirms Sadra's view that material (*zakat*) is only a potentiality. For this potential to be actualized into courage, spiritual readiness (*qabiliyyah*) is required, which is formed through discipline and 'riyadhah' effort. Without this inner readiness, *zakat* capital only becomes an additional burden, not an instrument of liberation.

Second, a fundamental shift occurs in the aspect of consciousness and self-meaning. *Mustahiq* begin to reconstruct their self-narrative, from a position as passive recipients (*manhu*) who are always waiting for help, to active agents or *fa'il* who can create change. This change in identity is an early form of what is called *Tashkīk al-Wujūd* the intensification or sharpening of the gradation of existence. Their previously vague and undefined existence has now become clearer and more focused on actions and achievements. Research by Bandura (1997) on self-efficacy, cited by Handayani (2013)[25] and published in various leading psychology journals, consistently shows that success in performing certain tasks directly strengthens an individual's self-confidence, which in turn changes their perception of who they are and what they can do. This mechanism of change can be explained through Sadra's theory of causality: repeated actions performed by *mustahiq* (such as trading discipline) slowly leave traces on the soul. If done

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[24] Keisha Azzahra Zalyaputri, "Menahan Niat Resign Di Generasi Z: Peran Empowering Leadership Dan Empowerment Dalam Hubungan Beban Kerja Dan Turnover Intention," *Repository Universitas Airlangga*, Universitas Airlangga, 2025.

[25] Febrina Handayani, "Hubungan Self Efficacy Dengan Prestasi Belajar Siswa Akselerasi," *Character Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi* 1, no. 2 (2013).

continuously, these traces turn into a permanent disposition (*malakah*). It is at this point that an ontological leap occurs: the *mustahiq* no longer "pretends" to be independent, but independence has become their substance. *Zakat* serves as the material fuel that enables the repetition of these actions to occur.

Third, the study identifies a Substantial Change in Thinking. In-depth observations show a cognitive revolution in how *mustahiq* perceive the world: they begin to view work not merely as a livelihood, but as an arena for worship; they view family not as a burden, but as a trust that must be safeguarded; and they understand *zakat* not as demeaning assistance, but as a mechanism for purifying wealth and the self. This is the essence of the concept of *Al-Ḥarakah al-Jawhariyyah* an internal movement of the soul that changes the way a person understands reality. This change is in line with the theory of transformative learning, in which a change in a person's frame of reference or framework of meaning occurs through critical reflection on experience, resulting in a more inclusive, integrated, and differentiated perspective.[26] However, this transition in thinking faces real ontological challenges. Not all *mustahiq* are able to transcend the boundaries of materialism. Some are still trapped in seeing *zakat* merely as free money. The failure of this transformation is often caused by the strong "material veil" that blocks the light of *hudhūrī* knowledge from entering the heart. Therefore, the BEBEZA Program plays a vital role not as a creator of guidance, but as a facilitator that seeks to uncover these veils through intensive assistance.

Fourth, all these changes culminated in the integration of spirituality with economic activity. *Mustahiq* no longer separated the world (business) from the hereafter (ritual worship). They began to consciously connect every economic activity with transcendental values such as gratitude for sustenance, trustworthiness in running a business, a strong work ethic as a form of worship, and active *tawakal*—trying their best and then leaving the results to God. This transformation is a form of *īqazh* or existential awakening, where the soul awakens from negligence and realizes the true purpose of its creation. On the other hand, spirituality in the workplace not only increases job satisfaction, but also has a positive impact on ethical performance and business sustainability, because spiritual values serve as an internal moral compass that guides behavior.[27] This integration marks the first step in the *mustahiq*'s journey towards *Insān al-Kāmil*. Although not yet achieving absolute perfection, *mustahiq* who have successfully integrated divine consciousness into market activities have proven that the dualism of this world and the hereafter can be transcended. Productive *zakat*, thus, becomes a bridge that leads the *mustahiq* from material alienation to existential wholeness. Thus, BEBEZA has succeeded in facilitating the ontological journey of the *mustahiq*, from passive existence to complete self-actualization, which is the true realization of Islamic Religious Education.

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[26] Edward W. Taylor, "Transformative Learning Theory," *Educare Gli Affetti: Studi in Onore Di Bruno Rossi.-(I Problemi Dell'educazione)*, Armando, 2018, 301–20.

[27] Junaid Aftab et al., "Ethical Leadership, Workplace Spirituality, and Job Satisfaction: Moderating Role of Self-Efficacy," *International Journal of Emerging Markets* 18, no. 12 (2023): 5880–99.

BEBEZA as an Ontological Mechanism for Education and Philanthropy

Comprehensive research results show that the BEBEZA Program does not function as a typical socio-economic intervention, but rather as a multidimensional instrument capable of driving fundamental transformation in beneficiaries. This role can be understood in depth through four main lenses, namely as *'Illah Fā'iliyyah* (the cause of change), as Arena *Tashkīk al-Wujūd* (a place for the intensification of existence), as a Transformative Education Model, and as a Philanthropic Practice that Approaches Sharia Goals. These four roles are interrelated and form a holistic ecosystem of transformation.

First, BEBEZA acts as *'Illah Mu'iddah* or the preparatory cause that conditions change. It should be clarified that in Mulla Sadra's strict metaphysics, the role of 'Illah *Fā'iliyyah* (Giver of Existence/Efficient Cause) essentially belongs only to God (*Wājib al-Wujūd*). No man-made program is capable of independently "creating" spiritual transformation. Therefore, BEBEZA's position is as a Preparatory Cause that prepares the material (*mustahiq*) to have a disposition (*isti'dād*) worthy of receiving an overflow of new existence. In this context, BEBEZA is not merely a supporting factor, but a catalyst that actively breaks the *mustahiq*'s existential deadlock. Through its structured program design ranging from training, intensive mentoring, to spiritual guidance this program creates positive disruption to the status quo of poverty and dependency. As stated in a study on community empowerment by Christens & Perkins (2008) in the American Journal of Community Psychology, a successful intervention is one that functions as a change agent by creating an empowering setting that allows individuals to develop control over their lives. BEBEZA, with all its components, clearly meets the criteria as an *'illah Fā'iliyyah* that triggers the transformation process.[28]

Second, this program functions as an Arena *Tashkīk al-Wujūd*. *Tashkīk al-Wujūd*, in Mulla Sadra's view, is a process of sharpening or intensifying existence, in which a person's existence moves from a lower to a higher level. BEBEZA provides an arena where this movement occurs concretely. *Mustahiq* not only change economically but also experience a gradual increase in their very essence: from passive and dependent "*zakat* recipients" to creative and independent "business actors," and finally to "productive members of society" who contribute. However, ontological boundaries must be drawn honestly. This gradation should be understood as the achievement of Civic/Economic Agency (independence as a citizen), and not necessarily Ontological Perfection of being) in the full mystical sense. *Mustahiq* are assisted in taking the first steps towards *Insān al-Kāmil*, namely the takhalli phase (emptying of the self) from a beggar mentality, which is an absolute prerequisite for further spiritual ascension. This progression reflects a fundamental change in role identity. The identity as an entrepreneur is not static but is

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[28] Brian Christens and Douglas D. Perkins, "Transdisciplinary, Multilevel Action Research to Enhance Ecological and Psychopolitical Validity," *Journal of Community Psychology* 36, no. 2 (2008): 214–31.

built and strengthened through experience and social interaction.[29] BEBEZA is a social arena where this stronger and more meaningful identity is constructed.

Third, BEBEZA is an effective Transformative Education Model. The core of this transformation lies in spiritual guidance, which serves as a medium for the internalization of values. This process is in line with Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, which argues that fundamental changes in perspective occur when individuals critically reflect on their long-held assumptions and beliefs.[30] Spiritual guidance in BEBEZA forces *mustahiq* to question the meaning of work, suffering, and blessings. By linking daily economic activities with the concepts of worship, trust, and tawakal (trust in God), this program changes their frame of reference. It is this change that shifts their existence from merely "surviving" to "living a meaningful life," the essence of ontological education. This is where the critical threshold of ontological transformation is tested: when does the accumulation of technical skills become the substance of the soul? In the Aristotelian/Sadrian view, merely "being able to trade" is only a change in quality (accident). However, BEBEZA encourages beneficiaries to go beyond that through the principle of al-'ilm huwal wujud (knowledge is existence). When knowledge about honesty and hard work is no longer just a concept in the head (knowledge by concept) but is internalized into a daily character reflex (knowledge by presence), that is when *Al-Ḥarakah al-Jawhariyyah* occurs. Skills that were once only "attached" are now integrated and change "who they are," not just "what they can do."

Fourth, BEBEZA is a philanthropic practice that fully approaches Sharia objectives. This program successfully implements three functions of *zakat* that are often overlooked in conventional distribution practices, namely: (1) *Tathīr* (purification), which not only purifies the wealth of the *muzakki*, but also purifies the soul of the *mustahiq* from feelings of resignation, despair, and a recipient mentality; (2) *Tazkiyah* (purification and growth), where *mustahiq* are not only purified from negativity, but also "nurtured" through higher knowledge, skills, and spirituality; and (3) *Taqwiyah* (strengthening of existence), where the end result is individuals who are stronger economically, psychologically, and spiritually, even though in practice there is still room for evaluation for *mustahiq* who have not been able to fully overcome the barriers of materialism. Research by Kahf (2004) in the Review of Islamic Economics emphasizes that the effectiveness of *zakat* institutions must be measured by their ability to realize *maqāṣid al-sharīah* (sharia objectives), which include the preservation of wealth (*hifdz al-māl*) and the public interest (*maslahah 'āmmah*). BEBEZA, with its four roles, has shown itself to be a model of Islamic philanthropy that not only empowers, but also humanizes and brings its actors closer to the true objectives of sharia.

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[29] Eva Kašperová and John Kitching, "Embodying Entrepreneurial Identity," *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research* 20, no. 5 (2014): 438–52.

[30] Ika Maryani et al., *Filsafat Pendidikan Transformatif: Telaah Konsep Dan Aplikasi Menghadapi Tantangan Pendidikan Kontemporer (Sebuah Bunga Rampai)* (Ika Maryani, n.d.).

D. Conclusion

This study comprehensively answers the initial objective of revealing the fundamental impact of the BEBEZA Program on beneficiaries. The main findings show that this program has gone beyond the conventional function of material assistance and serves as a catalyst for holistic transformation. This study found that the most significant impact of this program cannot be measured solely by an increase in assets or income, but rather by a fundamental shift in the ontological transformation of the beneficiaries, which in turn triggers socio-economic independence and forms a transcendental synergy between worldly practices and spiritual awareness.

Specifically, this study found three interrelated dimensions of transformation. First, there was a transformation of self-nature interpreted through the lens of *Muta'āliyah* Wisdom Philosophy as an increase in the intensity of existence (*Tashkīk al-Wujūd*). The beneficiaries moved from a state of passivity and helplessness to becoming proactive agents with self-confidence. Second, this internal transformation finds its manifestation in substantial movement in action (*Al-Ḥarakah al-Jawhariyyah*), which is evident in sustainable economic independence and, more importantly, in active social roles as mentors, job creators, and critical participants in public forums. Third, this study reveals a unique transcendental synergy, in which economic activity is not separated from spirituality. The *mustahiq* view their endeavors as a field of worship, a manifestation of the concept of *Aṣālat al-Wujūd*, where managing God's trust in the right way becomes a source of blessings and tranquility.

This finding makes a significant intellectual contribution by offering a deeper analytical framework for the study of *zakat* and empowerment in general. Instead of focusing solely on materialistic outputs, this research shifts to a fundamental outcome analysis, providing an ontological basis for behavioral change. This study proves that Islamic philanthropy programs, when designed with a solid philosophical and spiritual foundation, not only create economic independence but also shape spiritually whole human beings.

Based on these findings and conclusions, several directions for future research can be developed (1) This study was conducted within a specific time frame. It is recommended to conduct a longitudinal (long-term) study to observe the sustainability of this substantial transformation and movement. Do these changes persist and even develop over time, and how do they affect the next generation in the *mustahiq* family? (2) Further research can compare the effectiveness of the BEBEZA Model with other *zakat*-based empowerment programs that do not explicitly integrate the *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* philosophical framework. Comparative studies could also be conducted between the BEBEZA Program and secular microfinance programs in the same region to isolate the specific impact of spiritual integration. And (3) Further research is needed on how key elements of the BEBEZA Program design (particularly philosophical and spiritual mentoring) can be replicated and scaled up in various socio-cultural contexts in Indonesia or other Muslim countries. This research can identify critical success factors for adapting the model.

Currently, follow-up research is in the planning stages to delve deeper into the dimension of "transcendental synergy" found in this study. The next study will use an ethnographic approach to map in detail the daily spiritual practices integrated by *mustahiq* in their economic activities.

The focus is to understand how concepts such as prayer, effort, gratitude, and blessings practically influence their business decision-making, risk management, and social interactions, thereby providing a richer understanding of how spirituality becomes real capital in entrepreneurship.

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