

The Impact of Religious Influence on Humanitarianism: Evidence from Local Communities Affected by Floods in Kilosa, Tanzania

Lucas Shija Kitula & Nandera Ernest Mhando[§]*

Abstract

This article aims to elucidate the impact of religion on humanitarian practices within local communities affected by floods and the resulting contributions to community survival. Empirical data derived from interviews and focus group discussions conducted with community members in Msowero and Mbigiri wards, Kilosa District, in Morogoro Region, forms the basis of the study findings. Both Muslims and Christians perceive assisting the needy as a divine directive and command, with Holy Scriptures such as the Bible and Quran affirming that those helping their fellow humans will receive divine rewards. The act of helping the needy is identified as a means of validating one's faith, expiating sin, demonstrating respect for others, engaging in worship, and fulfilling a duty to God. The study reveals that individuals in flood-affected local communities actively engage in humanitarianism by helping victims. These acts encompass providing basic necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter, facilitating education services by covering school fees and acquiring uniforms for students, and offering health-related services. Such humanitarian practices significantly contribute to community survival by ensuring the availability of essential resources for victims, promoting good health and well-being, and facilitating access to social services, particularly education for children. This article not only highlights how religiously influenced humanitarianism is pivotal for community survival but also underscores the essential role played by individual local community members as crucial contributors to government and development partners' endeavours in safeguarding people's well-being during and after natural disasters like floods.

Keywords: *religion, humanitarianism, floods, local communities, Kilosa District*

1. Introduction

Feener and Wu (2020) contend that various forms of providing humanitarian assistance are frequently seen as expressions of ethical values and ritual obligations across diverse religious traditions. Numerous religious doctrines advocate for the ideals of compassion and generosity, prescribing liturgical guidelines for offering or donating; and the actual practices and perceptions of what constitutes 'appropriate' forms of giving humanitarian assistance are diverse (Feener & Wu, 2020). As noted by Goodall (2015), adherence to different faith traditions and

*PhD Candidate and Assistant Lecturer, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Dar es Salaam. Email: kitula.lucas@udsm.ac.tz

[§]Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Anthropology on secondment as Commissioner for Social Welfare – Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups.

religious communities have a longstanding history of aiding those in need, including those escaping war, those living in poverty, or those running away from persecution. From the 19th century onward, religious orders, monasteries, and charities representing various faith backgrounds have actively engaged in diverse forms of humanitarian assistance (Goodall, 2015; Ferris, 2005; Ager & Ager, 2011).

Religious traditions play a role in shaping believers' perceptions, attitudes and practices (Joakim & White, 2015). Ellison (1992) asserts that the desire to help is influenced by religious teachings. For instance, the Quran instructs Muslims to practice help-giving to vulnerable persons as a qualification for being true believers (Ferris, 2011). Likewise, the Bible urges Christians to help widows/widowers, orphans and other people in need. For example, in the United States, after the contamination of Flint Michigan's drinking water, Muslims in the United States responded by contributing more than \$300,000 and 1m bottles of water (Harpci, 2020). During the tsunamis of 1993 and the Typhoon Maemi of 2003 in Korea, both Muslim and Christian believers provided both material and moral help like counselling and supporting other relief activities in the affected communities (Ha, 2015). Therefore, religious beliefs motivate people to take on the task of delivering both physical and non-physical well-being to their fellow human beings (Clarke, 2008; Clarke & Jennings, 2008; Clarke et al., 2011 as cited in Clarke & Ware, 2015:37). Across various religious traditions, giving help to others is among the expounded ethical values and requirements (Feener & Wu, 2020). It is argued that generosity and compassion are preached in religious dogmas, and so individuals become obliged to engage in humanitarian help-giving (Feener & Wu, 2020).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Perspective of the Study

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) stands out as a widely employed framework for examining and predicting an individual's inclination to participate in a specific behaviour at a particular time and location (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Rooted in Ajzen's 1975 Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the TPB breaks down the determinants of individual intention into two core variables: attitudes and subjective norms. Within the TPB, intention is characterized as an indication of the degree to which an individual is prepared to endeavour and try to execute a behaviour (Ajzen, 2005). This readiness to act represents the strongest proxy for discerning an individual's subsequent behaviour. However, intention remains a predisposition until the necessary effort is exerted to translate that intention into actual behaviour. Attitude, portraying a positive or negative assessment of the exhibited behaviour, subjective norms encompassing socially acceptable pressure and expectations to either engage or abstain from the behaviour, and perceived behavioural control, reflecting the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour: all serve as direct

determinants influencing intention (Ajzen, 1991). The TPB serves as a robust instrument for scrutinizing an individual's behaviour by delving into the rational thought process shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioural control; factors that ultimately impact decision-making (Kashif & De Run, 2015; Smith & McSweeney, 2007). This approach not only elucidates the correlation between intention and behaviour, but also comprehensively elucidates the rationales and convictions underlying specific actions (Kashif & De Run, 2015; Smith & McSweeney, 2007).

In this study, the TPB fits to link individuals' religious beliefs and giving humanitarian assistance to victims of floods. Here, givers of humanitarian assistance seem to have positive attitude towards helping their fellow community members who have been affected by floods. Such a positive attitude is influenced by their religious beliefs. People believe that helping the needy brings about blessings from God. For instance, for Muslims, helping people in need is a way of validating faith, erasing sin, pleasing God, protecting oneself against misfortune, receiving help from heaven, and escaping punishment from God on the judgement day. So, these are regarded as factors influencing people's positive attitude toward performing/engaging in humanitarian behaviour.

Several studies (Bennett & Einolf, 2017; Shukor et al., 2016; Einolf, 2011; Bekkers & Schuyt, 2008) advocate for the application of TPB in investigating the impact of religion on individuals' engagement in providing humanitarian assistance. Bennett and Einolf (2017) contend that the majority of research on religion indicates that religious individuals are more inclined to assist others because religious values influence their internal norms and values, thereby playing a pivotal role in fostering internal motivation towards helping others. Similarly, Einolf (2011) asserts that individuals acquire religious values and ideas, using them as guides for engaging in social behaviours. According to Bekkers and Schuyt (2008), all major world religions underscore the importance of caring for others, viewing religion as a significant factor in promoting civic engagement and compassionate behaviour across various countries.

2.2 Conceptualization of Key Terms

2.2.1 Religion

The term 'religion' is very complex to define, and its convincing general theory does not exist (Guthrie, 1996). Similarly, Crawford (2002) affirms that there is no universally accepted definition of religion. Although there are many definitions of religion, they fall into two major categories: functional categories (stating what religion does); and substantive categories (stating what religion is) (Crawford, 2002; Jensen, 2014).

According to Smith (2017), religion is a composite of culturally prescribed practices – based on premises about the existence and nature of superhuman powers, whether personal or impersonal – which seek to help practitioners gain

access to, and communicate or align themselves with, these powers in the hope of realizing human goods and avoiding bad things. This definition includes not only what religion can do for people, such as helping them to recognize goods and avoid bad things; but also motivations of religious practices, such as looking for the right entrance to, and connect/line up oneself with, superhuman powers (Smith, 2017). People do believe that these superhuman powers make things happen that are beyond their capacity (ibid.). This implies that even if beliefs are not central to religion, they cannot be excluded because their role is manifested in the intentional repetition of practices (ibid.).

However, Jensen (2014) asserts that religion is just a term that refers to a concept and not any given fact, and it is a term used to cover a certain range of human behaviour, empirically as well as theoretically. People are religious because they expect assistance from superhuman powers to rescue and support them during crises, preventing bad luck, making them realize some goods, and so forth. According to Smith (2017: 191), "... if religion could not promise the help of superhuman powers, then religion would not exist." Since promises for help from superhuman powers are there, then religion does exist, and is practised by humans. In this study, religion is understood as people's beliefs and practices underpinned by the promise of receiving help and grace from superhuman powers or God.

2.2.2 *Humanitarianism*

Richey (2018) argues that humanitarianism, as a concept, has been debated a lot in academic literature. According to Benthall (2018), humanitarianism emerged in the 20th century to represent the ambitions of the developed world to dismiss suffering in societies facing acute crises. These include both acute crises (disasters), and protracted crises (refugees). It is said that humanitarianism originated in the West; and especially from European experiences of war and natural disasters (Davey et al., 2013: 1). The history of concern here means responding to needs in the situation of crises such as natural disasters or conflicts; including the provision of livelihood support, supporting displaced populations in acute and protracted crises, and the like (Davey et al., 2013). Olliff (2018: 659) defines humanitarianism "... as an 'ethos' or 'cluster of sentiments' that places value on human beings and compels action in response to human suffering." Apart from having a sense of responsibility for fellow humans, humanitarianism can be seen through efforts to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity for the benefit of people in need; and who are at risk of becoming affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters or other disaster situations, which are severe impediments to the supply and survival mechanisms of populations or entire communities (Wohlgemuth, 2010). In this study, humanitarianism is understood as practices that aim at reducing or removing suffering and saving the lives of people affected by natural disasters

like floods and earthquakes. Examples of these humanitarian practices include the distribution of food, providing shelter, offering temporary settlements to displaced people, reconstructing destroyed houses, counselling victims/survivors of disaster and other forms of assistance.

2.2.3 Local Community

Understanding the key role played by local community members in humanitarianism is currently paramount because, for a long time, the Global North-South approach has dominated scholarship. Local community (LC) means a community whose members reside in relative proximity, such that they can regularly meet together for different purposes, often in a dedicated physical venue (Kraft, 2015; Ager & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2015). In this case, we consider LCs as Muslims and Christians who live in flood-affected communities where the study was conducted. These people meet regularly in Churches and Mosques for worship and other religious events. These LCs respond to crises quickly, and sometimes are approached by the victims asking for both material and moral support. Humanitarian help by LC members is always informal and comes first before formal help by governments, NGOs and international organizations can be mobilized (Twigg & Mosel, 2017). It is argued that, when crises like floods occur, instant response like sheltering the homeless, rescuing properties, and distributing food is done by local community members (Twigg & Mosel, 2017). Some literature sources expose the role of LC members in humanitarianism (Takazawa & Williams, 2011; Takazawa, 2013; Vallance, 2011; Dominguez-Rios et al., 2014; Goulding, et al., 2017; Shaw, 2014; Lin et al., 2017; Irene-Saban, 2012; Berry & Reddy, 2010).

2.3 Religion and Humanitarianism

Literature on humanitarianism (World Conference of Religions for Peace, 2000; Clarke, 2008; Clarke & Jennings, 2008; Kirmani & Khan, 2008; Clarke et al., 2011; Benthall, 2015; Clarke & Ware, 2015; Harpci, 2020) shows the role of religion through activities done by faith-based organizations (FBOs). Humanitarian help by FBOs is limited to funds from both internal and external donors (Khafagy, 2020). This has led them to operate more formally with fixed procedures in providing help to victims. Although FBOs are accredited for a good job in humanitarianism, in some cases they are accused of being biased as they favour populations with the same religious affiliation (Sangasumana & Lakshman, 2014). Moreover, although they are easily trusted, FBOs have more access to communities that share the same faith (Orji, 2011; World Conference of Religions for Peace, 2001). For instance, when violence occurred in Jos City in Nigeria, humanitarian help provided by some of the FBOs was not secular as it was based on people of the same faith (Orji, 2011). As Benthall (2018) argues, FBOs have been taking the humanitarianism field as an opportunity for safeguarding funding and acceptability.

The role of religion in humanitarianism does not only manifest in FBOs, but also in religious individuals through their minor efforts (Ferris, 2011). Humanitarian help by individuals is, to some extent, different from that of FBOs that depends on donor funding. Individuals provide a range of support: from trauma counselling and prayers; as well as basic needs such as shelter, food, and clothing even if their beneficiaries are few. FBOs need to have enough resources to cover a large number of victims, and so their help is procedural and hence does not reach recipients on time (Parsitau, 2011). If that is the case, in general FBOs do not differ from other secular NGOs in terms of their activities and operations (Parsitau, 2011). So, in understanding the role of religion in humanitarianism, it is imperative to explore its influence on religious individuals. This is because their humanitarian help is not procedural, and normally depends on what they have at the moment without seeking funds anywhere else. Gingerich et al. (2017) point out that religious actors of humanitarianism, particularly individuals, play a key role; and so they are appreciated in their communities because they are the first responders in times of crises, compared to FBOs and other formal actors like the government and NGOs. In line with that, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2013) affirms that local religious actors, like individuals, respond to crises within the first 24 to 96 hours of the crises happening because they live in the communities where such disasters occur. For instance, when crises like floods occur, these actors have been engaging in giving psychological support; and food and shelter to the victims in cases where their houses have been destroyed (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013).

Despite the fact that literature shows the crucial role of religion in humanitarianism through FBOs, there is a notable lack of recognition for its significance in guiding individuals to provide humanitarian assistance during crises such as floods (Joakim & White, 2015). Bush et al. (2015) posit that environments affected by crises, such as natural disasters, offer a context where the involvement of individual religious actors in humanitarian efforts can be better comprehended, particularly through the lens of individual local residents who interact daily with crisis victims. While existing literature in this domain often focuses on elucidating the role of religion through FBOs, this study focuses on understanding how religion influences individuals in offering humanitarian assistance to fellow community members affected by floods. Investigating the impact of religion on humanitarianism is especially pertinent to individuals, given their regular interactions with disaster victims, enabling them to grasp the immediate needs of those affected. This emphasis on individuals stands in contrast to FBOs, which sometimes conduct assessments of crisis impacts before delivering aid, potentially resulting in delayed assistance during the initial days of disasters.

3. Methodology

This article draws from findings garnered through an ethnographic study as part of a larger study exploring the influence of religious beliefs on ordinary citizens and wealthy philanthropists towards their behaviour of engaging in

everyday humanitarianism during crises. This study was particularly conducted in Msowero and Mbigiri wards in Kilosa District, Morogoro Region. The villages included were Mambegwa, Mbigiri, Mateteni, and Msowero. These villages were selected because of their significant history of experiencing floods almost every year, and with significant impacts as mentioned by the Kilosa District Risk Reduction Coordinator during a pilot study conducted in February 2022. Moreover, Morogoro Region is among the study areas of the Everyday Humanitarianism project in Tanzania.¹ The study participants included individual community members who are the givers of humanitarian assistance, victims of floods (receivers of humanitarian help), and religious leaders. A purposive sampling method was applied to select the participants of the study. The participants for this study were identified with the assistance of community leaders who had access to the lists of both flood victims and individuals providing humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, flood victims who had received aid were asked to identify their helpers, who were subsequently interviewed.

The research employed ethnographic methods, specifically utilizing in-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), participant observation, and documentary review. These methods were purposefully selected to comprehensively explore participants' attitudes, behaviours, and experiences concerning humanitarian practices. The in-depth interview method was employed to collect data from both individual givers of humanitarian assistance and recipients considered as victims of floods. A total of 75 in-depth interviews were conducted, focusing on gathering information regarding participants' experiences with floods, the various forms of humanitarian assistance provided, and the motivations behind their assistance. Notably, specific inquiries were made to find out whether the religious beliefs of individual givers influenced their behaviour in providing humanitarian assistance. As suggested by Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 60), the interview method was chosen to "... explore issues in-depth and in detail." This approach enabled the researchers to delve deeply into the research phenomenon by posing both structured and unstructured questions to the respondents. Kothari (2004: 98) notes that the interview method offers flexibility, allowing for the restructuring of questions as needed, and facilitating the collection of more comprehensive information.

The FGDs method was strategically employed to corroborate and validate the information gathered from the in-depth interviews. FGDs were conducted with groups of individual givers representing the Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Tanzania Assemblies of God denominations, and Muslims, selected through their respective religious leaders. In total, eight (8) FGDs were conducted, with the participation of 64 individuals. Specifically, six (6) FGDs were held with Christians, focusing on Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran

¹ Everyday Humanitarianism in Tanzania is a project that sponsored Lucas Kitula's PhD study.

Church, and Tanzania Assemblies of God denominations; while the remaining two (2) were conducted with Muslim participants. Each religion and denomination had dedicated FGDs for both males and females, with eight (8) participants in each group, totalling sixty-four (64) participants for all FGDs.

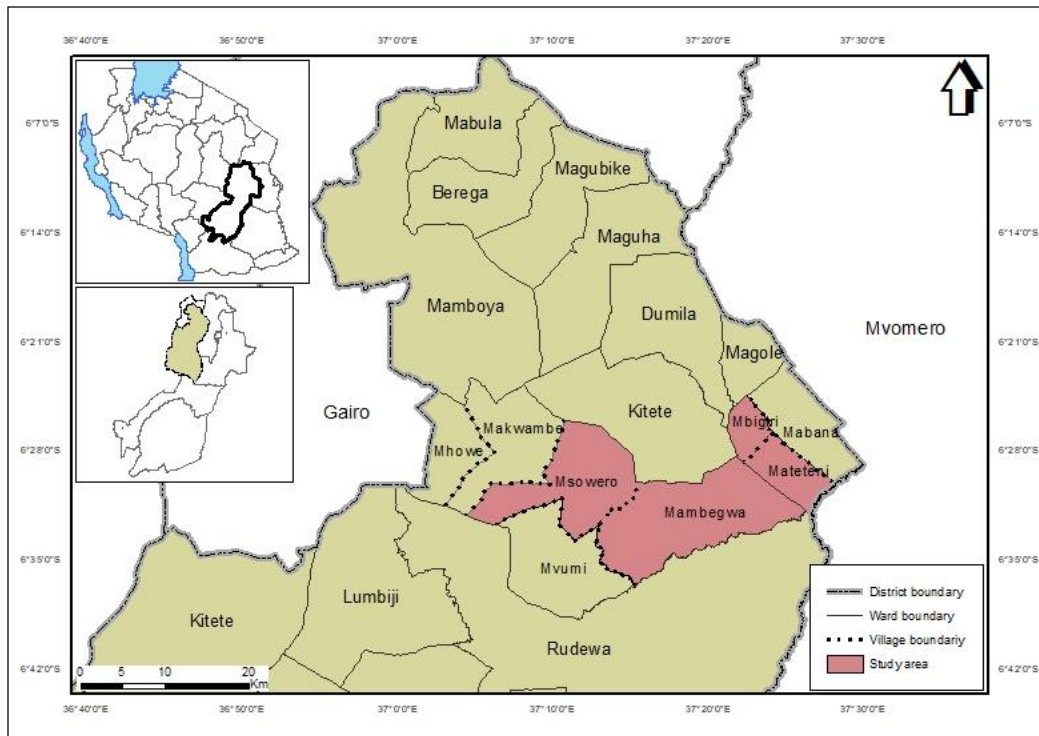


Figure 1: Location of the Study Areas in Kilosa District

Source: Cartographic Unit, Department of Geography, University of Dar es Salaam (2023)

The research employed participant observation (PO) to directly observe the impacts of floods and the living conditions of the affected individuals. This method facilitated the capture of visual documentation illustrating the repercussions of floods. Additionally, the documentary review (DR) method served as a complementary approach to the primary methods (FGDs and IDIs), facilitating the collection of secondary data pertaining to the history and consequences of floods in Kilosa District, as well as the types of humanitarian assistance previously provided to flood victims, and the motivation for providing them. Both IIDIs and FGDs were conducted in Kiswahili. Throughout these interactions, conversations were recorded and subsequently transcribed and translated into English. The data obtained from both IDIs and FGDs was analysed using the NVivo software. This tool proved advantageous for organizing ideas

and developing themes due to its capacity to accommodate various data types, including word documents, PDFs, videos, images, webpages, spreadsheets, and social media data (Dollah et al., 2017). Furthermore, the NVivo has the capability to map patterns of keywords and ideas, classify keywords and ideas, group keywords, themes, and sub-themes; ultimately facilitating an organized thematic representation of data (Dollah et al., 2017: 63).

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 History of Floods and their Effects in Kilosa District

Sub-Saharan Africa is among the parts of the world experiencing changes in climatic conditions that result in the occurrence of frequent floods (Kikwasi & Mbuya, 2019). Tanzania is also one of the countries in Africa that face severe floods due to torrential rains (Ringo et al., 2016; Mihayo, 2015). Again, Kilosa District is one of the areas in Tanzania that are vulnerable to floods due to dynamic rivers (Mihayo, 2015). This results in the occurrence of floods almost every year (ibid.). During the interviews with community members in Kilosa, it was noted that, although other natural disasters – such as drought and famine – occur in Kilosa, floods were claimed to happen more regularly. Elderly informants described their experience with floods dating back to the 1960s. In some places, floods occur every year; while in other places there is an interval ranging from one to two years. The frequent occurrence of floods has made residents familiar with the disaster. One of the FGDs participants had the following to say:

In general, our village and the whole ward depends on the rains that fall in other areas. We depend on the water that comes in after it has rained in other areas. For example, if it rains in Kilombero, water flows in; so the geography of our ward is basically for receiving more water from other places than when it rains here. For that reason, floods are normal events every year; with an interval of maybe one year or two. It is impossible to have three consecutive years without floods (FGD with male Muslims in Mbigiri Village, July 2022).

Studies show that Kilosa District has been experiencing floods since 1935 due to the presence of big rivers such as Mkondoa and Tame Rivers (Mihayo, 2015). This situation has exposed the district to the worst floods in Tanzania. Among the floods that have occurred in Kilosa, it is claimed that those of 1997–1998, 2009–2010 and 2013–2014 were the most disastrous (ibid.).

Floods are some of the critical stumbling blocks for realising sustainable development goals. Due to floods, there have been economic, psychological and health vulnerabilities in communities (Kikwasi & Mbuya, 2019); people have been forced to leave their homes after their houses were demolished by floods. Ringo et al. (2016) affirm that Kilosa District has been facing serious floods resulting in diverse effects, including economic loss, psychological effects, water-related diseases, loss of livestock, displacement of people, destruction of infrastructure and houses, destruction of farms and basic needs (e.g. food, mattresses, and clothes), loss of people's lives, and failure to access social

services like education due to demolished schools and blocked roads. One of the respondents said, “The floods of 1967 destroyed one school in Mlio; after that came the floods of 2009 and 2010 that brought so much suffering” (IDI with one of the flood victims in Msowero Village, August 2022). Another victim of floods claimed that he has been affected by floods three times:

The last time floods almost wiped me out was on the 12th of February 2022. Before that, in 2016, floods damaged my house which was worth TZS2.8 million. I had bought this house from someone. I also had a phone-charging business, and that day floods arrived at 3 a.m. ... about 70 customer phones went with the water, one subwoofer music unit was washed away, and 12 roofing sheets and other articles belonging to my tenants got lost. To date, I have not recovered. I feel like I can't remake my plans anymore (IDI with the victim of floods in Mambegwa Village, May 2022).

Generally, floods disrupt communities through perpetuating poverty and hunger, and damaging social services like education and infrastructure. The study findings align with those of studies by Smiley and Hambati (2020), Sweya (2020), Mihayo (2015) and Meena et al. (2006). All these studies confirmed that floods have been disturbing agricultural activities (destroying farm produce), causing deaths, leading to the eruption of diseases like malaria, cholera and diarrhoea. They also lead to malnutrition as food becomes very scarce during and after floods, especially in the affected households. Sweya (2020) reports that the floods that occurred in 1992/1993, 1997/1998, 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 in Tanzania brought about water-related diseases as water supply systems were contaminated by flood water.



**Photo 1: A Primary School in Mambegwa Village (Msowero Ward)
Completely Demolished by Floods in February 2022**
(Used with permission from the Village Chairperson).



Photos 2 & 3: Houses and Belongings Destroyed by Floods Completely in February 2022

(Used with permission from the Village Chairperson).

4.2 Religious Influence on Humanitarianism

All religious traditions are based on the belief that it is a divine duty to care for, and protect, the most vulnerable members in the society; including widows/widowers, the sick, orphans, the disabled, and the impoverished (Ferris, 2011). This study sought to establish the extent to which religion influences people's behaviour in giving humanitarian aid to victims of natural disasters like floods.

The findings reveal that religious beliefs, holy texts, and teachings seem to inculcate helping behaviour in people. Across various religious traditions, helping in various ways is frequently seen as an expression of ethical values (Feener & Wu, 2020). The respondents viewed 'helping' as instruction from God, and it has benefits to the givers. They claimed that God, through the holy books such as the Bible and Quran, promises payback to those who help their fellow human beings that are in need. Both Christians and Muslims interpret 'help-giving' as a God's command, and a way of validating one's faith. This implies that if one has true faith, one will be concerned with people in need, and so offer help to them. People believe that if one does not give help while s/he has the ability to do so, God will punish such a person; and s/he will miss paradise. The findings show that, since help-giving is regarded as a God's command, those who refuse to obey it might be cursed; and this may even affect their next generations.

However, some of the study participants contended that, although religion is a key factor in giving help, it is something that is intrinsic to an individual's heart, since not all people who are able to give help feel inclined to do it.

4.2.1 Christian Religion

For Christians, giving help to the needy has a long history. Early Christian churches were voluntary organizations or sects made up primarily of people who lacked substantial monetary possessions. Apostle Paul specifically talked about the exceedingly poor populations in Macedonia and Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8: 2 cited in Bird, 1982). The early Christians were afraid of two realities, which forced them to help the needy: the first was the Judgement Day; and the second was God's Kingdom. Giving help was a way of getting prepared for these two eventualities, so people needed to change their lives (Matt. 19: 30 cited in Bird, 1982). In keeping with these two verses, the powerful and wealthy would lose their influence and fortune while the underprivileged and downtrodden would be freed, honoured and taken care of (Luke 1: 47-55 cited in Bird, 1982). So, for Christians, preparations for the future are associated with humanitarian actions like showing kindness and sharing possessions by feeding the hungry, helping strangers. and so forth (Bird, 1982).

Christian teachings from the Roman Catholic Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Tanzania Assemblies of God denominations have been a foundation for faith that is associated with empathy. During the interviews with Christians, it became clear that their desire and strength to help and care for others come from God. This is because the Bible emphasizes that helping others is an investment in heaven, and so the helpers should expect to profit from it. People affirmed that such promise strengthens their faith and the process of seeking God through actions of helping others, as they believe that faith without action is dead. People consider those who help others as the proverbial good Samaritans.

4.2.2 Islam Religion

For Muslims, engaging in humanitarian acts is an integral aspect of their religious observance and guidance. Muslims hold the belief that performing acts of kindness is essential for seeking divine assistance, seeking forgiveness for their sins, and ultimately attaining entry into paradise, irrespective of their financial status (Krafess, 2005; Lev, 2007). Assisting those in need is not discretionary for believers; rather, it is a duty closely associated with other religious obligations such as prayer, fasting during Ramadan, and going on pilgrimage to Mecca. The institutional mechanisms established by the religion—such as zakat, waqf, and Kaffara—have historically wielded substantial influence, resulting in the emancipation of slaves and providing significant aid to the most vulnerable (Krafess, 2005).

The participants in the study contended that extending assistance to others can be achieved through the act of giving tithes, which contributes to aiding individuals in need. Regardless of the magnitude of the contribution, the belief is that the giver will be blessed. The perspective is that possessing a generous spirit can prompt divine intervention, where God may send people to assist the giver in times of trouble. Conversely, those who refrain from giving are perceived to be susceptible to divine punishment. One of the respondents asserted:

The faith of my religion persuades me to give, and it is the instruction of the religion itself... Severe punishment will be given to believers who withhold assistance while they have the ability (IDI with a Muslim giver in Mbigiri village, August 2022).

Giving humanitarian assistance is perceived as a means of preventing and curing illnesses, as well as safeguarding one's property. Worship holds a fundamental and indispensable role in Islam, where the term is interchangeably used with *ibaadah*. In Islam, worship is a comprehensive term encompassing all that God loves and finds pleasing, spanning both verbal and practical expressions: both explicit and implicit (Alawani, 2019). Some Muslims also view giving help as an opportunity to attract individuals, particularly those in need, from other religious backgrounds to consider joining Islam.

4.3 Importance of Misaada in the Survival of Communities

Communities that take care of one another, the sick, and the vulnerable have a higher chance of surviving than those that do not (Ferris, 2011). This study considers 'taking care of one another' as engaging in humanitarian practices; practices which are signified by the word '*misaada*'.² Such *misaada* are not supposed to be demanded, or asked for, by the victims; rather, givers themselves see it as their obligation to help their fellow community members, especially when they have no shelter after their houses have been demolished by floods. In the communities affected by floods in Kilosa District, housing the victims, offering counselling, repairing damaged houses, rescuing properties, and distributing food, money, clothes and mattresses: all were mentioned as common forms of *misaada* provided during and after the occurrence of floods. Although the government, through the district disaster management committee, visits the affected villages and conducts assessment of the impacts, help from the government is not provided instantly compared to that from religious communities.

4.3.1 Provision of Housing, Food and Clothes

As admitted by the study participants, farm produce stored in houses and food crops still in the farms get destroyed during floods, and so food security becomes a concern. Also, floods normally wash away fertile soils leaving behind barren land that cannot support crops. Again, transported sand is heaped over crops, e.g. bananas and cassava, suffocating them.

² Swahili word for 'help' in plural form

4.3.2 Education for Children

Quality education is a key aspect of human development (UN, 2015). This has also been a target of the Sustainable Development Goals (Unterhalter, 2019). It is asserted that all situations that obstruct the fulfilment of the right to education should be addressed (SDG, 2019). This study found that local communities are very active and enthusiastic in addressing floods-related challenges facing their children in accessing education. The local communities ensure there is a safe learning environment by constructing new schools to make sure that their children continue accessing their right to education. The communities have been organizing themselves with assistance from the government to build temporary schools. Some community members, especially wealthy philanthropists, pay for school fees and other needs like school uniforms and stationery for students from families affected by floods. The findings show that there are some villages where schools have been frequently destroyed whenever strong floods occur. One of the Christian study participants admitted:

This is the second time this school has been rebuilt after it was demolished by floods. The first time it was demolished was in 2007, after which it was rebuilt between 2009 and 2010. As residents here, we took it upon ourselves to rebuild the school. The government also gave us some help (IDI with a Christian giver in Mambegwa Village, June 2022).

4.3.3 Health Related Services

The survival of the community depends on the good health and well-being of its people. As explained in previous sections, there have been issues of health and well-being associated with floods. Water-related diseases like malaria and cholera were mentioned as among the effects of floods threatening the health and well-being of community members. Due to the lack of food, there is a risk of malnutrition. Moreover, some flood victims affirmed to have been affected psychologically due to the loss they incurred after losing their properties including food, livestock, and houses. Housing and food distribution were among the efforts taken to ensure the well-being of the community. One of the Muslim givers made the following comment:

... others came asking for help, but I told them that my home compound was full as I was already housing other victims. One of them was only asking for a turubai³ which he could use to put up a temporary shelter. I gave him one canvas sheet and two mosquito nets they could use to protect the children from mosquitos (IDI with a Muslim giver in Mateteni Village, June 2022).

5. Conclusion

This study sought to provide an understanding of how religion influences humanitarian practices by individuals in local communities affected by floods,

³ Swahili word for collapsible shelter of fabric that resembles a tent. It can serve as a shelter.

and how they contribute to the survival of communities. The findings indicate that the Christian doctrine upholds human qualities such as empathy, love, compassion, and giving help as an investment in heavenly rewards. The Christian perspective interprets Jesus' crucifixion as a profound expression of God's love for humanity, with God being regarded as the ultimate giver. Christians consider offering assistance as a tangible demonstration of their faith and a genuine care for the welfare of others. The teachings of Jesus significantly influence their giving behaviour, particularly following baptism in the Holy Spirit. Providing aid is seen not only as an embodiment of kindness, but also as a significant means of actively engaging in civic responsibilities and contributing to the welfare of the broader society.

The research findings reveal that Muslims perceive humanitarian acts as integral to their religious practices and guidance. They affirm that acts of kindness are crucial for seeking divine assistance, forgiveness, and ultimately securing entry into paradise, irrespective of one's financial standing. This commitment is not discretionary but forms a part of religious obligations; including prayer, fasting, and going on pilgrimage to Mecca. Historical institutional mechanisms such as *zakat*, *waqf*, and *kaffara* have played a role in the emancipation of slaves and providing substantial aid to the most vulnerable. Within Islam, giving aid is regarded as an act of worship; and it is also believed to yield rewards from Allah. Muslims also consider humanitarian assistance as a means of preventing and curing illnesses, as well as safeguarding personal property. Worship holds a central role in Islam, encompassing everything that God loves and finds pleasing. Acts like providing assistance and displaying kindness to neighbours are deemed integral components of worship within the Islamic framework.

The findings show that the common humanitarian assistance provided by individual local community members encompasses activities such as food distribution, giving cultivation farms, providing crop seeds, offering shelter and clothing, and participating in the construction or repair of schools and houses, among other related needs. These contributions play a crucial role in ensuring the well-being and survival of communities affected by floods. The study findings underscore the fact that individual members within these communities emerge as the initial and rapid responders to flood-related crises. It is noteworthy that the humanitarian assistance provided by individual local community members is not only significant, but also occurs promptly at the occurrence and location of floods.

Consequently, the study calls for scholars and researchers to broaden their perspective beyond the Eurocentric view of humanitarianism, which often focuses on the global North-South divide, and distant others. The emphasis is on recognizing that individual local community members are the ones offering contextual, swift, and informal assistance to victims; unlike the more procedural aid provided by international organizations, governments, and NGOs.

Assistance from the latter tends to come in late during flood crises. Furthermore, the study advocates for the formulation of policies that acknowledge the crucial role played by individual community members during disasters like floods. It is being proposed that these members should actively be involved in the formulation of disaster management strategies, thus enhancing the overall effectiveness of response and recovery efforts.

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the support of the *Everyday Humanitarianism in Tanzania* project implemented in collaboration between the University of Dar es Salaam and Copenhagen Business School, Denmark. The project is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and administered by the DANIDA Fellowship Centre.

References

- Ager, A. & Ager, J. (2011). Faith and the Discourse of Secular Humanitarianism. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24(3): 456–472.
- Ager, A. & Ager, J. (2015). *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement: Finding the Place of Religion in the Support of Displaced Communities*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY.
- Ager, J., Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. & Ager, A. (2015). Local Faith Communities and the Promotion of Resilience in Contexts of Humanitarian Crisis. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 28(2): 202–221.
- Ajzen, I. (2005). *Attitudes, Personality and Behaviour* (2nd edition). New York: Open University Press.
- Armitage, C. J. & Conner, M. (2001). Efficacy of the Theory of Planned Behaviour: A Meta-Analytic Review. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 40(4): 471–499.
- Bakari, M. (2007). Religion, Governance, and Development in Tanzania. In Mhina, A. (Ed). *Religions and Development in Tanzania: A Preliminary Literature Review*.
- Bennett, M. R. & Einolf, C. J. (2017). Religion, Altruism, and Helping Strangers: A Multilevel Analysis of 126 Countries. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 56(2): 323–341.
- Bolotta, G., Scheer, C. & Feener, R. M. (2019). Translating Religion and Development: Emerging Perspectives From Critical Ethnographies of Faith-Based Organizations. *Progress in Development Studies*, 19(4): 243–263.
- Cheung, S. W. L. & Kuah, K. E. (2019). Being Christian Through External Living. *Religions*, 10(9): 529.

- Clarke, G. (2008). Faith-based Organizations and International Development: An Overview. In Clarke, G. & Jennings, M. (Eds). *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations*, (pp.17–45). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Clarke, G. & Jennings, M. (2008). Bridging the Sacred and the Secular. In Clarke, G. & Jennings, M. (Eds). *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Clarke, M. & Ware, V. A. (2015). Understanding Faith-Based Organizations: How FBOs are Contrasted With NGOs in International Development Literature. *Progress in Development Studies*, 15(1): 37–48.
- Devisscher, T., Konijnendijk, C., Nesbitt, L., Lenhart, J., Salbitano, F., Cheng, Z. C., Lwasa, S. & van den Bosch, M. (2019). SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities—Impacts on Forests and Forest-Based Livelihoods. *Sustainable Development Goals: Their Impacts on Forests and People*, 349–385.
- Dominguez-rios, L. E., Izumi, T. & Nakatani, Y. (2015). A Disaster Management Platform Based on Social Network System Oriented to the Communities Self-Relief. *IAENG International Journal of Computer Science*, 42(1): 1–16.
- Ellison, C. G. (1992). Are religious people nice people? Evidence from the National Survey of Black Americans. *Social Forces*, 71(2): 411–430.
- Feener, R. M. & Wu, K. (2020). The Ethics of Religious Giving in Asia: Introduction. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 35(1): 1–12.
- Ferris, E. (2005). Faith-based and Secular Humanitarian Organizations. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 87(858): 311–325.
- Ferris, E. (2011). Faith and Humanitarianism: It's Complicated. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24(3): 606–625.
- Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2013). Local Faith Communities and the Promotion of Resilience in Humanitarian Situations: A Scoping Study Working Paper Series No. 90.
- Gingerich, T. R., Moore, D. L., Brodrick, R. & Beriont, C. (2017). *Local Humanitarian Leadership and Religious Literacy: Engaging With Religion, Faith, and Faith Actors*.
- Goodall, C. (2015): *Shouting Towards the Sky: The Role of Religious Individuals, Communities, Organizations and Institutions in Support for Refugees and Asylum Seekers*. Research Paper No. 275 Geneva: UNHCR.
- Green, M., Mercer, C. & Mesaki, S. (2010). The Development Activities, Values and Performance of Non-Governmental and Faith-Based Organizations in Magu and Newala Districts, Tanzania.
- Green, M., Mercer, C. & Mesaki, S. (2012). Faith in Forms: Civil Society Evangelism and Development in Tanzania. *Development in Practice*, 22(5–6): 721–734.
- Ha, K. M. (2015). The Role of Religious Beliefs and Institutions in Disaster Management: A Case Study. *Religions*, 6(4): 1314–1329.

- Haakenstad, A., Johnson, E., Graves, C., Olivier, J., Duff, J. & Dieleman, J. L. (2015). Estimating the Development Assistance for Health Provided to Faith-Based Organizations, 1990–2013. *PLoS One*, 10(6): e0128389.
- Harpci, F. (2020). Who is My Neighbour? *Journal of Muslim Philanthropy & Civil Society*, 4(2): 3–27.
- Joakim, E. P. & White, R. S. (2015). Exploring the Impact of Religious Beliefs, Leadership, and Networks on Response and Recovery of Disaster-Affected Populations: A Case Study from Indonesia. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 30(2): 193–212.
- Kashif, M. & De Run, E. C. (2015). Money Donations Intentions Among Muslim Donors: An Extended Theory of Planned Behaviour Model. *International Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 20(1): 84–96.
- Khafagy, R. A. (2020). Faith-based Organizations: Humanitarian Mission or Religious Missionary. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, 5(1): 1–11.
- Kikwasi, G. & Mbuya, E. (2019). Vulnerability Analysis of Building Structures to Floods: The Case of Flooding Informal Settlements in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *International Journal of Building Pathology and Adaptation*.
- Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research Methodology. Methods and Techniques* (2nd Ed.). New Delhi: New Age International (P) Limited Publishers.
- Krafess, J. (2005). The Influence of the Muslim Religion in Humanitarian Aid. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 87(858): 327–342.
- Kraft, K. (2015). Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response: Lessons From Lebanese Evangelical Churches Providing Food Aid. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 97(897–898): 395–421.
- Krause, N., Ironson, G. & Hill, P. (2018). Religious Involvement and Happiness: Assessing the Mediating Role of Compassion and Helping Others. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 158(2): 256–270.
- Leurs, R., Tumaini-Mungu, P. & Mvungi, A. (2011). *Mapping the Development Activities of Faith-Based Organizations in Tanzania*.
- Mallya, E. T. (2007). Religions, Policy and Tanzania's Public Sector Reforms. In A. Mhina (Ed.) *Religions and Development in Tanzania: A Preliminary Literature Review*, pp. 31–52.
- Meena, H. E., Lugenja, M. & Stephenson, M. (2006). Climate Change Impacts on Livelihoods in Tanzania and Adaptation Options: Experience of Floods and Drought in Rufiji. The Centre for Energy, Environment, Science and Technology (CEEST Foundation).
- Mhina, A. (2007). *Religions and Development in Tanzania: A Preliminary Literature Review*.
- Mihayo, I. Z. (2015). Evaluation of Households' Willingness to Contribute Labour in Floods Prevention and Mitigation Projects in Kilosa District, Tanzania. Doctoral Dissertation, Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania.

- Mikani, M., Tabatabaei, K. R. & AzadAllah, P. (2022). Who Would Iranian Muslims Help? Religious Dimensions and Moral Foundations as Predictors. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 44(1): 23-39.
- Narayanan, Y. (2013). Religion and Sustainability: Analysing the Critical Connections. *Sustainable Development* 21(2): 131-139.
- Nunes, A. R., Lee, K. & O'Riordan, T. (2016). The Importance of an Integrating Framework for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals: The Example of Health and Well-being. *BMJ global health*, 1(3): e000068.
- Ogbonnaya, J. (2012). Religion and Sustainable Development in Africa: The Case of Nigeria. *International Journal of African Catholicism*.
- Olarinmoye, O. O. (2012). Faith-based Organizations and Development: Prospects and Constraints. *Transformation*, 29(1): 1-14.
- Orji, N. (2011). Faith-based Aid to People Affected By Conflict in Jos, Nigeria: An Analysis of the Role of Christian and Muslim Organizations. *Journal of Refugee studies*, 24(3): 473-492.
- Otekunrin, O. A., Fasina, F. O., Omotayom, A. O. & Akram, M. (2020). Assessing the Zero-hunger Target Readiness in Africa in the Face of COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Parsitau, D. S. (2011). The Role of Faith and Faith-Based Organizations Among Internally Displaced Persons in Kenya. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24(3): 493-512.
- Poplaski, S. C. (2017). *Charitable Behaviour: Christian Beliefs That Explain Donor Intentions*. Kansas State University.
- Ringo, J., Luvinga, K., Morsardi, L., Omary, I., Mayengo, G. & Kawonga, S. (2016). Indigenous Knowledge in Flood Management and Control in Kilosa District, Tanzania. *Int. J. Mar. Atmos. & Earth Sci*, 4(1): 1-15.
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J. (Eds.) (2003). *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. Sage.
- Rydzewski, P. (2022). Sustainable Development and Religion. A European Perspective. *Problemy Ekorozwoju*, 17(1).
- Sangasumana, P. & Lakshman, R. W. (2014). Humanitarian Interventions and the Suspicion Factor of Faith-Based Organizations in Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies (IJMS)*: 1(2).
- SDG, U. (2019). Sustainable Development Goals. *The Energy Progress Report. Tracking SDG, 7*.
- Shukor, S. A., Anwar, I. F., Sabri, H., Aziz, S. A. & Ariffin, A. R. M. (2016). Giving Behaviour: Who Donates Cash Waqf? *Malaysian Journal of Consumer and Family Economics (MAJCAFE)*.
- Sidibé, M. (2016). Religion and Sustainable Development. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 14(3): 1-4.

- Smiley, S. L. & Hambati, H. (2020). Using Photograph Interpretation to Understand Perceptions of Floods in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *Papers in Applied Geography*, 6(2): 159-173.
- Smith, J. R. & McSweeney, A. (2007). Charitable Giving: The Effectiveness of a Revised Theory of Planned Behaviour Model in Predicting Donating Intentions and Behaviour. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 17(5): 363-386.
- Sundqvist, J. (2017). Beyond an Instrumental Approach to Religion and Development: Challenges for Church-Based Healthcare in Tanzania. Doctoral Dissertation, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Sweya, L. N. (2020). Improving Water Supply Systems Resilience to Floods: Developing a Measurement Tool for Tanzania. Doctoral Dissertation, ResearchSpace@ Auckland.
- Takazawa, A. (2013). Compassion at a Distance: How Ordinary People Are Enabling Their Compassion to Self - Organize Disaster Relief Efforts Remotely and Collaboratively. *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 50(1): 1-4.
- Thaut, L. C. (2009). The Role of Faith in Christian Faith-based Humanitarian Agencies: Constructing the Taxonomy. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Non-profit Organizations*, 20(4): 319-350.
- Tomalin, E. (2012). Thinking About Faith-Based Organizations in Development: Where Have We Got to and What Next? *Development in Practice*, 22(5-6): 689-703.
- Tomalin, E., Haustein, J. & Kidy, S. (2019). Religion and the Sustainable Development Goals. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 17(2): 102-118.
- Tumainimungu Peter, P. (2007). The Development Activities of Faith-Based Organizations in Tanzania. In A. Mhina (Ed.). *Religions and development in Tanzania. A preliminary literature review*.
- Twigg, J. & Mosel, I. (2017). Emergent Groups and Spontaneous Volunteers in Urban Disaster Response. *Environment and Urbanization*, 29(2): 443-458.
- United Nations (2015). *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York: United Nations.
- World Conference of Religions for Peace. (2000). Role of Religion in Humanitarian Action From the Community's Perspective.