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An Exploration on the Impact of Zakat Distribution among Asnaf Orang Asli: A Study in the State of Pahang, Malaysia

¹Mohd. Kamal Azman bin Jusoh, ²Ramlan Mustapha, ³Asjad Mohamed, ⁴Fauzi Bin Azmi, ⁵Azizi@Hamizi Bin Hashim

^{1,3}Academy of Contemporary Islamic Study, Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang, Jengka Campus, ²Academy of Contemporary Islamic Study, Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang, Raub Campus, ⁴Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang, Jengka Campus, ⁵Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang, Jengka Campus
Corresponding Author's Email: ramlan@uitm.edu.my

Abstract

The mandatory giving of zakat is a central tenet of Islam. The wealth gap can be narrowed by the implementation of a system like zakat, which helps the poor. The collection of zakat, similar to income tax, may be maximised through efficient administration. This study attempts to explore the impact of Zakat distribution among Asnaf Orang Asli in Pahang State region in Malaysia. This study uses qualitative methods in collecting research data. Interviews were conducted with 5 research participants who have knowledge of zakat distribution in the state of Pahang, Malaysia. The findings of the study show that the distribution of zakat that is implemented has a very good impact among the asnaf, from the economic, social, spiritual and infrastructural aspects. findings also successfully prove that the distribution of zakat in the state of Pahang is given and distributed well according to the target group and has an impact as targeted by the authorities.

Keyword: Zakat Distribution, Orang Asli, Asnaf, Pahang State.

Introduction

In most Muslim nations, poverty is a big issue. Through the Holy Quran and the Sunnah, Islam teaches that zakat is an important social tool that may help to bridge the wealth gap between affluent and poor Muslims (Johari et al., 2015). Zakat, when regarded in this light, has the potential to be beneficial. If properly managed, the zakat play a key part in Muslim socio-economic growth. One of Islam's five pillars is the practise of zakat. Our wealth and our hearts are cleansed by paying zakat, a term that means "growth" or "increase" (Qardawi, 1999). It is obligatory for all Muslims whose wealth exceeds the nisab to pay zakat. The al-Qur'an states that zakat payments can only be given to specific groups of people. For the sake of Allah (*Fisabilillah*), there are eight types of zakat receivers, including those who are in need, the destitute (*Miskin*), the zakat official (*Amil*), those whose hearts have been reconciled to Islam (*Muallaf*) and those who are in slavery and captivity (*al-Riqab*) (*Ibnu Sabil*). According to the

Qur'an, the purpose of implementing zakat is to prevent the accumulation of riches in the hands of a small number of people. Qur'an, 9:60).

Muslims have a religious duty to donate a portion of their money to those in need in order to promote equality and fairness in society (Ridhwan, 2012). It is one of the zakat beneficiaries listed in the Qur'an because of the fairness and sincerity of Islamic teaching that draws people to become a part of it via conversion or reconciliation of hearts (Muallaf-al-Qulub). Through zakat distribution, financial assistance can help people develop their faith (iman) and their sense of belonging to the Islamic community (ummah). In addition, there are some who are anti-Islamic and want to deter them from doing so by donating money, and so on. As part of the Islamic social welfare system, Zakat (Ali et al., 2013; Johari et al., 2015) plays a vital role in helping Muslims in need.

It is the Islamic Council of each state in Malaysia that is in charge of zakat administration, and each council has the right to manage its own collection and distribution. So far, a number of methods have been created to help achieve this goal. These include establishing office locations, hiring and training staff, and creating a computerised zakat collecting system. The *Pusat Pungutan Zakat* (Zakat Collection Centre) in the Federal Territory of Malaysia, established in 1991 for the goal of collecting zakat with a more systematic administration, including computerization, is an example of current Malaysian zakat collection techniques. It is now a form of zakat administration that has developed to meet the needs of the changing world.

Zakat Distribution among Orang Asli

Zakat must be distributed to the eight asnafs that are written in Surah at-Taubah, verse 60, namely to the poor, poor, amil, muallaf, slaves who want to free themselves, people in debt, people who strive in the way of God and the ibnu sabil group. Although zakat institutions in Malaysia have distributed zakat in line with the demands of syariah, there are still distribution issues that cause debate and problems such as the distribution problem given to less qualified asnaf and the problem of poverty which still affects the performance of the zakat institution itself. In order to realize the potential of zakat distribution in improving the community's economy, cooperation and integrated actions from various parties including the main role of zakat institutions and zakat recipients need to move together. This aims so that the real objective of distribution is achieved and the development of the Muslim community can also be developed comprehensively (Hidayah, 2014).

The indigenous community (Orang Asli) also benefited from this zakat distribution as a result of their settlement in rural areas which caused some zakat institutions to overlook their existence. According to JHEOA (2003) the achievement of the Orang Asli development program after 40 years does not show a proud achievement where the level of poverty and destitution among Orang Asli households is still at a high level in almost 80 percent of households living below the poverty line and 50 percent of which is categorized as poverty. In addition, there is an unfounded perception from a few people in the community that institutions involved in zakat distribution such as state religious councils or zakat collection centers do not carry out their duties and responsibilities effectively. This is because the indigenous community has been completely ignored by the authorities. Allegations like this need to be explained through empirical research so that the confusion can be overcome since the authorities have done many activities and programs with the indigenous community. For example, in 2011 a total of 140 series of missionary and friendly pilgrimages were carried out to the non-Muslim indigenous community and new relatives. In addition, in the same year, a

course to strengthen faith and understanding of Islam was also implemented for this group (JAKIM Annual Report, 2011).

The distribution of zakat to converted asnaf among the Orang Asli community carried out by MUIP consists of several forms of assistance. The assistance provided is not limited to financial assistance alone, but assistance from the point of view of increasing religious values in the converts is also provided. According to Samihah (2018), the type of assistance given to Asnaf converts to Orang Asli is divided into three parts. The first part is the self-sufficiency aid which is the Consolation of Embracing Islam and the Hari Raya Annual Aid. While the second part includes the productive building of religious values which consists of Dakwah Brigade Class (KBD), Convert Guidance Class, Fardhu Ain Class with Mobilizers, Dakwah Pilgrimage Program and Creed Strengthening and Program with Converts. The third part is known as general assistance which includes the Umrah Sponsorship Program and Donations to Organizations. All the types of assistance mentioned are from the annual zakat fund successfully collected by MUIP through its subsidiary, the Pahang Zakat Collection Center (PKZP).

In this study, the author selected several Orang Asli villages in Jerantut to obtain information regarding the focus of the study. This study will discuss the study of the impact of zakat distribution on the Asli community and it is hoped that it can help towards improving the standard of living of the Asli community in terms of social, economic, educational, spiritual and infrastructure. Through this study as well, it is hoped to contribute to the improvement of the zakat distribution system by giving more attention to the Asli community as asnaf who deserve to receive zakat. In addition, it can improve the perception and misunderstanding of a few people in addition to strengthening their confidence in the implementation of zakat collection and distribution by the institutions and agencies involved.

Research Aims

This research aims to explore the impact of zakat distribution among Asnaf orang Asli in the state of Pahang, Malaysia

Literature Review

Dawah programmes are more focused on problem resolution, according to Aisyah Jami'an in her Ph.D (2013). thesis titled "Da'wah Program and Improvement of Life Quality Among Orang Asli Reverts in Gombak (Program Dakwah Dan Peningkatan Kualiti Hidup Saudara Baru Orang Asli Di Gombak)". Constant time, expertise, and attention must be dedicated to planning and organising these events for the target audience. Mainly, da'wah programmes are aimed at promoting Muslim self-improvement so that they might flourish in various areas of their lives. Islamic da'wah is an activity, an endeavour to incite, lead, and advise the society in a methodical and sensible way (Mohamed & Nordin, 2019). In a study titled "PERKIM Activities in Pahang for Cambodian Reverts (Aktiviti PERKIM Pahang untuk Muallaf Masyarakat Kemboja)" by Puteh et al (2015), the PERKIM da'wah approaches implemented in Pahang via education and welfare. Both methods emphasise the importance of charitable activities, such as religious classes for children, adolescent motivation courses and so on, as well as the training of preachers and other members of the community. People who haven't yet converted to Islam and those who've recently done so are the target audience for the Islamic evangelism.

Zakat has been recognised as a social institution and a tool to boost Muslims' economic and social standing. The first step in establishing zakat as a social institution was the creation of zakat collection and distribution units and the appointment of zakat officials at the state level

(Ahmad et al., 2014). However, zakat administration varies widely among Malaysia's individual states (Shawal, 2011). It is up to individual states to establish and enforce their own zakat laws and practises. Since the 1990s, several state religious bodies have seen it as necessary to decentralise and privatise the Zakat management, including the collection and distribution of the zakat to the ordained beneficiaries, due to the growing number of contributors from corporations, co-operative bodies, NGOs, and individuals. Zakat can more swiftly achieve its goal of eradicating poverty in the Muslim world if income produced from industrial, commercial, and financial activities are included, as was the case with the wealth that might be subject to zakat during the time of the Prophet Mohammad (Kahf, 1989; Ahmad et al, 2014).

Shehata (1994) examined the guidelines for dispersing zakat among the eight different categories of recipients, including who is eligible for it and how much of it they receive (asnafs). According to Idris & Ayob (2002), a company's compliance with zakat regulations can be affected by employees' perceptions of and familiarity with the practise. Having a strong religious belief (iman) and religious education have been shown to increase conformity (Nor et al., 2004). Issues of efficiency and efficacy within the Zakat Institution in Malaysia were discussed at length, and a report on the performance of zakat distribution in Malaysia by Abd Halim et al (2005) was cited often. Research published in 2000 revealed how each state in Malaysia contributed to the national zakat tithe. Distribution of zakat in the states between the asnafs the impoverished and fisabilillah the able-bodied was mostly influenced by demographics (on the path of Allah). There was found to be a significant discrepancy between the 11% and 26% distributions made by the amil (collector of zakat). Additionally, a structure was presented in the study to illustrate the efficacy of zakat disbursement.

Wahab & Abdul Rahman (2012) study estimates zakat efficiency using the data envelopment analysis (DEA) approach and then uses the Tobit model to quantify zakat institution efficiency in Malaysia. The DEA model's technical, pure technical, and scale efficiencies all improve. Empirical research in Malaysia on zakat institutions suggests that many factors greatly impact their effectiveness: zakat payment, computerised zakat system, board size, audit committee, and decentralisation. Based on the findings, it appears that in Malaysia, zakat efficiency is increased when zakat institutions are completely corporatized but decreased when they are only partially corporatized.

Based on the highlights of this literature, it clearly shows the role of zakat is so great in Muslim society. The need for well-distributed zakat can help the Muslim community and be able to move the Muslim economy in particular. It is more clear here, that the distribution of zakat that is carried out effectively can form a society that helps each other and does good to other communities that are not financially capable and manage their lives.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the impact of zakat distribution on the indigenous community in Pahang. This situation is considered appropriate because this study wants to obtain information and impact behind the distribution of zakat to the indigenous community. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher to obtain information from MUIP officers who are responsible for the distribution of zakat. For the purpose of eliciting their perspectives on the zakah distribution among orang Asli, a total of five participants were chosen to take part in the interview sessions. Purposive sampling were employed in this study. Within purposive sampling, the author picked a respondent who has expertise relevant to the zakah distribution done by MUIP within the Orang Asli community.

After that, a request was made to the respondent to make recommendations for more respondents who are able to contribute useful information to this study. Because of its capability to summarise, evaluate, and compare the major aspects (themes) from a large qualitative data collection, this technique was determined to be the most appropriate way for analysing the data that was gathered. In point of fact, the majority of researchers consider thematic analysis to be a useful research method for capturing the complexities of meaning within a rich qualitative data set, such as the transcripts of semi-structured interviews (Boyatzis, 1998). This is because thematic analysis focuses on identifying common threads or themes that run throughout the data. It should come as no surprise that this methodology has been implemented in a variety of organisational research projects (Bryman & Burgess, 2002; Cassell & Symon, 2004; Johnson et al, 2004).

Interview

In order to investigate the impact of zakah distribution among orang asli, interviews of a semi-structured format were carried out. As the interviews were only semi-structured, the participants were allowed to steer the course of their own interviews; nevertheless, the researchers did establish a basic subject guide in order to assure some level of uniformity throughout all of the interviews. In the context of this study, interviews were conducted online using Google Meet, as face-to-face access is difficult. Interview sessions are conducted for 30-50 minutes.

Data Analysis

The interviews were first digitised and then transcribed word for word. Following a number of rereadings of the transcripts in order to facilitate familiarisation, a single researcher by the name of B.A. applied theme analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Inductive in the sense that the data itself was used to generate codes without any predetermined ideas about what might be found, and phenomenological in the sense that its goal was to understand and describe how participants thought and felt in relation to the research topic. The type of thematic analysis that was used was inductive. The data were coded by assigning fragments of text to theme codes that stood for the meanings included in the data. A comprehensive list of thematic codes was compiled by combining codes that were relevant to one another to produce "themes." These "themes" were then examined and arranged. This method was used in order to gain the greatest possible understanding of the experience that the participants had and to develop any emergent themes from the data.

Participants

As explained before, the researcher used 5 MUIP officers who were involved in the distribution of zakat dakam among the natives. They are very experienced and have been with MUIP for a long time. Therefore, the data obtained is valid and reliable.

Table 1

Participants Profile

No	Jobs scope	Years of service
Participant 1	Asnaf Development Unit MUIP	31 years
Participant 2	Head of the MUIP financing unit.	11 years
Participant 3	Management and Islamic Administration	9 years
Participant 4	Islamic Affairs Officer	10 years
Participant 5	Assistant Missionary Officer	3 years

Findings

Here the researcher will explain the findings of the interview analysis that has been conducted on the participants

No	Data findings
Participant 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>From a spiritual point of view, he stated that MUIP has allocated assistance for the construction of mosques or suraus, salaries and allowances for mosque officials</i> • <i>From an economic point of view, assistance is provided to the Orang Asli under the Asnaf Development Unit. MUIP will help meet their needs in terms of assistance in the form of agricultural development as well as skills such as sewing and handicrafts</i> • <i>While from a social point of view, the Creed Strengthening Program was held to strengthen the relationship between MUIP and the Orang Asli community. In this program, other events such as sports, getong-royong, entertainment and others are inserted</i>
Participant 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>provision in terms of education is channeled proactively to the Orang Asli community in the Jerantut district under the muallaf and new brother unit. The impact that can be seen from the distribution of this aid is the spread of Islamic teachings, appreciation and guidance. MUIP plans to send Orang Asli children to religious schools and even to IPT so that they can form a better career and help their families and communities</i> • <i>In terms of spirituality, MUIP allocates the distribution of zakat money for fardhu ain courses, lectures and tahlil that are interspersed with entertainment elements. MUIP always evaluates (review & retreat) spiritual planning in the future. MUIP also plans programs for the Orang Asli community, especially in Jerantut, so that they can become community icons and role models such as becoming priests and being able to preach</i> • <i>In terms of infrastructure, there are provisions provided by MUIP for the construction of a prayer hall.</i>
Participant 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>From a social point of view, many programs carried out such as MUIP in collaboration with government agencies including the National Registration Department (JPN) aim to help Orang Asli change their identity cards after converting to Islam</i> • <i>From a social point of view, the MUIP usually organizes a village-to-village pilgrimage program and includes sports activities and</i>

	<i>mutual cooperation or known as village community activities. Orang Asli who are not Muslim will also cooperate with the MUIP</i>
Participant 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>From a spiritual point of view, the construction of suraus can build good relationships among the Orang Asli community through congregational prayer activities and can increase their faith in God.</i> • <i>from a social point of view, usually the MUIP organizes a village-to-village pilgrimage program and includes sports activities and mutual cooperation or known as village community activities</i>
Participant 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>in terms of education, MUIP provides assistance such as annual assistance, Eid assistance or consolation to PETAMA students</i> • <i>From a social point of view, the cost incurred by MUIP to sponsor marriages between the Orang Asli community is approximately RM 300 for forms, Qadhi and so on. For a party or dressing up, the MUIP will usually hold a program and issue a budget, for example, a party, matchmaking and so on.</i>

From the results of the interviews conducted on the 5 people of this panel, the writer found that the main aspect that is of concern to MUIP is the educational aspect followed by the spiritual aspect. In addition, the three aspects that occupy the next priority list are the social aspect followed by the infrastructure aspect and the last one is the economic aspect. Overall, the writer was able to identify which aspect provided the greatest benefit behind the distribution of zakat in the state of Pahang, especially in the Jerantut district.

Discussion and Conclusion

In general, this study aims to see the impact of zakat distribution on the Orang Asli community in Jerantut, Pahang. The study found that the impact of 3 aspects, namely education, spirituality and economy, was given priority by the Islamic Religious Council of Pahang (MUIP) in distributing zakat aid. These three aspects are interconnected because they can build and strengthen unity among the Orang Asli community. MUIP wants to provide exposure to knowledge, especially religious knowledge, to the Orang Asli Muslim community so that they can preach to their community in addition to being able to change the fate of their families. In addition, education is emphasized to bridge the gap between the Orang Asli community and the Malay community. Next, education is closely related to spirituality where suraus are built to facilitate learning activities apart from holding other spiritual activities such as congregational prayers, reading Yasin and tahlil. Apart from spiritual activities, social activities are also organized such as sports, getong-royong and pilgrimage programs. For this reason, the MUIP allocates zakat distribution money to these 3 main aspects.

However, the MUIP still needs to further expand the distribution of zakat by focusing on 5 aspects, namely education, spirituality, social, economy and infrastructure. Overall, the results of this study show that MUIP should maintain a positive performance and continue to reach out to the Orang Asli community so that they are easily attracted to Islam in addition to preventing the symptoms of apostasy among people who have embraced Islam. Next, by further expanding the distribution can empower and contribute towards the socio-economic direction of the country in the future.

Overall, MUIP plays a role in perfecting the trust of Muslims in terms of distribution of zakat money. A new initiative needs to be done as an effort to empower the MUIP function. It needs to be implemented consistently to produce more professional and efficient officers in the administration of zakat distribution. In addition, in order to smooth and launch the management of zakat distribution nowadays, the use of organizational management technology needs to be maximized. This initiative should be continued through appropriate programs or activities in order to have a positive impact on the asnaf group, especially among the Orang Asli community. The MUIP needs to understand their responsibilities and roles clearly. This is important because the role of MUIP and the zakat distribution fund is a catalyst for the process of change in the asnaf group in order to generate development in the future. This development process can be seen in terms of a better standard of living that is free from the shackles of poverty, economic and social improvement. The distribution by the MUIP can continue to guarantee the sustainability of the Muslim Indigenous community in line with the incentives and Islamic teachings that encourage success and progress in every aspect of life. It is hoped that this study can make a direct contribution to zakat worship in terms of the impact of zakat distribution, systematic administration and service quality. Indirectly, it can help the parties involved achieve the objective and target of zakat distribution, which is to improve the socioeconomic status of the Orang Asli community in general in Malaysia, particularly in Jerantut, Pahang.

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