

A CASE STUDY ON AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ZAKAT FITRAH AMONG STAFF IN JERANTUT DISTRICT ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS OFFICE

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Abstract: *Zakat fitrah is very important in our lives. Either the person who receives zakat or the person who issues zakat. Awareness of the importance of zakat to our society is low. The reason why the payment of zakat is important is because the purpose of zakat itself is to help the poor and needy. With the help of Zakat Fitrah, at least they can change their lives as with the help of zakat earned, they can cover the increasingly high cost of living nowadays. This has been supported through this study from the factors that affect the insensitivity of zakat payment. As a result, the main purpose of this study is to study and find factors that encourage all Muslims to be less sensitive to the importance of zakat fitrah. This study was conducted on the staff of the Jerantut District Islamic Religious Office (PAID). This study is based on data from a questionnaire survey that was distributed to 40 officers and staff and only 34 people were selected as a sample for this study. After analyzing the data, the research findings show that the officers and staff have a good understanding of the science of zakat fitrah, but their level of awareness about the importance of zakat fitrah should be further improved. As a result of this study, zakat institutions and society need to improve in all aspects to create more awareness of the importance of zakat fitrah. Suggested solutions are also written in this study to increase the level of awareness to be more sensitive to the importance of zakat fitrah.*

Keywords: *Zakat Fitrah, Islamic Religious Office, Jerantut District, Public Trust, Zakat Distribution*

Introduction

Islam emphasizes the creation of a just, united, and humane society, with protections against hunger and guarantees of social security and human dignity. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) highlighted the severity of hunger as a social issue. Zakat, an obligatory charity for Muslims, is a key mechanism to prevent starvation and support socioeconomic justice, ensuring the fulfillment of obligations to Allah (SWT) (Ibrahim, 2008).

Zakat is mandated for Muslims and directed towards specified purposes in the Quran. It ensures that wealth is not concentrated among a few but is distributed to the needy. Through zakat and *sadaqah* (voluntary charity), Islam promotes equitable distribution of wealth, ensuring basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and education are met (Islam & Mohd Noor, 2018). Historically, Islamic matters, including zakat, were managed by the State Islamic Religious Councils (SIRCs), while non-Islamic matters were handled by British civil and criminal law. The Majlis Ugama Islam dan Istiadat Melayu (Council of Religion and Malay Customs) supervises zakat administration at the state level, allowing local imams to oversee collection and distribution within their communities (Sapingi et al., 2020). State policies on zakat differ, particularly regarding types and management practices. The Federal Constitution and fatwas from the SIRCs significantly impact Malaysia's zakat system, affecting its implementation across various zakat organizations (Sapingi et al., 2020).

Muslims are required to pay zakat fitrah, contributing a portion of their wealth to zakat institutions. This practice aims to prevent wealth concentration and promote responsibility towards property. Willingness to pay zakat reflects gratitude and obedience to Allah (SWT) (Muhammad et al., 2015). However, there are several reasons for non-compliance, including being too busy, forgetfulness, inconvenience, and procrastination (Sinar, 2018). Negative perceptions of zakat institutions' management also deter payments, leading individuals to distribute zakat personally, which can be unfair to other recipients (Ahmad & Wahid, 2005; Perbawa & Abdullah, 2016). This study examines zakat fitrah practices in Malaysia, factors contributing to insensitivity towards zakat and proposes solutions to increase awareness. A survey will be conducted using questionnaires distributed to staff at the Jerantut District Islamic Religious Office (PAID Jerantut) to achieve the study's objectives.

Literature Review

Introduction

Zakat fitrah is an obligatory practice for all Muslims, particularly during Ramadan. Muslims meeting the requirements must pay zakat fitrah annually, regardless of age, gender, or income. Before the Eid al-Fitr prayers, Muslims must give zakat fitrah, equivalent to the price of a 2.7-kilogram bushel of rice. Despite the reasonable value, many people fail to pay this zakat. Initially paid in sacks of rice, zakat fitrah is now paid in Malaysian ringgit, with annual rates set by each state based on local rice prices. Typically, the zakat fitrah amount per person is below RM10. However, those with higher incomes who use more expensive rice brands must pay a higher rate (Heng et al., 2019). The literature review includes the researcher's findings, data gathering, and viewpoints, discussing the concept of zakat fitrah, factors affecting zakat payment sensitivity, and possible solutions to increase awareness of its importance.

Overview of The Concept of Zakat Fitrah

According to fuqaha, "zakat" means taking a specific amount from property for those entitled by God's decree. "Fitrah" denotes purity and the natural state, describing zakat fitrah as zakat

given after Ramadan to purify customs during the month. The Qur'an supports this with the verse: "*Establish prayer, pay alms-tax, and bow down with those who bow down*" (al-Baqarah: Verse 43). Qualified zakat payers are adult Muslims with wealth equal to or greater than the *nisab*. Eight categories of individuals are eligible to receive zakat: the needy (*fuqara*), those in need (*masakeen*), zakat collectors (*aamileen*), recent converts to Islam (*muallaf*), those in bondage (*ar-riqaab*), debt-ridden individuals (*al-gharimeen*), and those fighting in the path of Allah (*fi-sabilillah*) (Nasir & Rahman, 2020).

Three Factors contributing of Insensitivity to Zakat Fitrah

Doubts of Zakat Payers on the Transparency of Zakat Institutions

A significant reason for low zakat fitrah awareness is distrust in zakat institutions. Payers lack sufficient evidence that their payments reach the rightful recipients. This distrust often stems from past incidents of fraud by individuals posing as *amil*s, leading payers to disregard the importance of zakat fitrah (Freemalaysiatoday, 2016).

Attitude and Personality

Individuals' attitudes and lack of closeness to Allah SWT contribute to negligence in paying zakat fitrah. Some prioritize family needs over zakat, despite its small value. This issue highlights the need for greater religious education and emphasis on the importance of zakat (Perbawa & Abdullah, 2016).

Lack of Awareness in Paying Zakat Fitrah

Awareness about zakat fitrah remains low. For example, in Perak, only 20% of eligible Muslims paid zakat on property in 2022, reflecting a broader lack of understanding of zakat obligations. Increased education and awareness efforts are needed to encourage zakat payment (Ikram, 2022).

Three Solutions for Increasing Awareness of the Importance of Zakat Fitrah

Provide Evidence to The Public

Zakat institutions should be audited by the National Audit Department and make their financial management transparent to the public, like how taxpayers view tax expenditures. This transparency can increase payer confidence. Establishing an impartial oversight body to ensure proper fund management can further enhance trust (Freemalaysiatoday, 2016).

Prioritize Religion

Addressing public ignorance about Islam is crucial. Distributing informational materials through various media can help educate the community. Encouraging a mindset change towards prioritizing religious obligations can also foster greater compliance with Zakat Fitrah (Ngadiman et al., 2016; M. Jazmi, 2019).

The Role of Zakat Institutions

Efficient zakat distribution is essential for maintaining trust. Zakat should be promptly disbursed to local recipients, ensuring maximum financial and spiritual benefits. Transparency and service quality are key to gaining public trust (Aziz & Anim, 2020; Mustafa et al., 2013; Syafei, 2015).

Research Methodology

The researcher will use quantitative methods, focusing on numerical data collection and analysis to test hypotheses and measure variable relationships. A questionnaire on Google Forms has been used, making it easier for respondents to participate without interrupting their work. The questionnaire will have three sections:

Part A: Demographic profile (age, gender, position, income).

Part B: Factors affecting zakat fitrah insensitivity, using a scale for responses.

Part C: Proposed solutions for increasing awareness about zakat fitrah, also using a scale. Collected responses will be analyzed and compared, incorporating library resources for a realistic and reliable study.

Quantitative methods will be used with 34 PAID Jerantut staff respondents completing the questionnaire via Google Forms. Data will be collected and recorded for analysis. Quantitative research characteristics include numerical data collection, deductive theory-study linkage, natural science methods, and objective social reality understanding. This study uses primary data collection and document analysis, gathering information through structured questionnaires answered by PAID Jerantut staff. Quantitative data will be analyzed to conclude the research. The researcher will compare responses from the questionnaire, using a framework based on observations of PAID Jerantut working environment. The frequency measurement method, a descriptive statistical technique, will display response frequencies. SPSS Statistics will compute mean, median, and mode to analyze and summarize data, particularly the demographic profile, and provide insights into gender, age, and class percentages. Descriptive statistics offer brief coefficients to summarize data sets, forming the foundation for further statistical analysis.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Analysis of Respondent's Backgrounds (Part A: Demographic Profile)

Age

Frequency distribution and percentage of respondents by age are shown in table 1. The largest age group is 18-29, which is 22 individuals (64.7%). This is followed by age 30-39, which is 7 individuals (20.6%). Next, followed by 4 individuals aged 40-49 (11.8%). Then, the age of 50-59 years is only 1 individual (2.9%). This shows that the majority of PAID Jerantut staff who answered this questionnaire are aged 18-29 and 30-39.

Table 1: Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percent (%)
18 - 29	22	64.7
30 - 39	7	20.6
40 - 49	4	11.8
50 - 59	1	2.9
Total	34	100.0

Gender

Table 2 shows the distribution of frequency and percentage of respondents by gender. Based on the table below, there are 24 male staff respondents which means around 70.6%. compared to 10 female staff respondents (29.4%). This shows that there are more male respondents than female respondents. This happens because there are more male staff than female staff at PAID Jerantut.

Table 2: Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	24	70.6
Female	10	29.4
Total	34	100.0

Position at PAID Jerantut

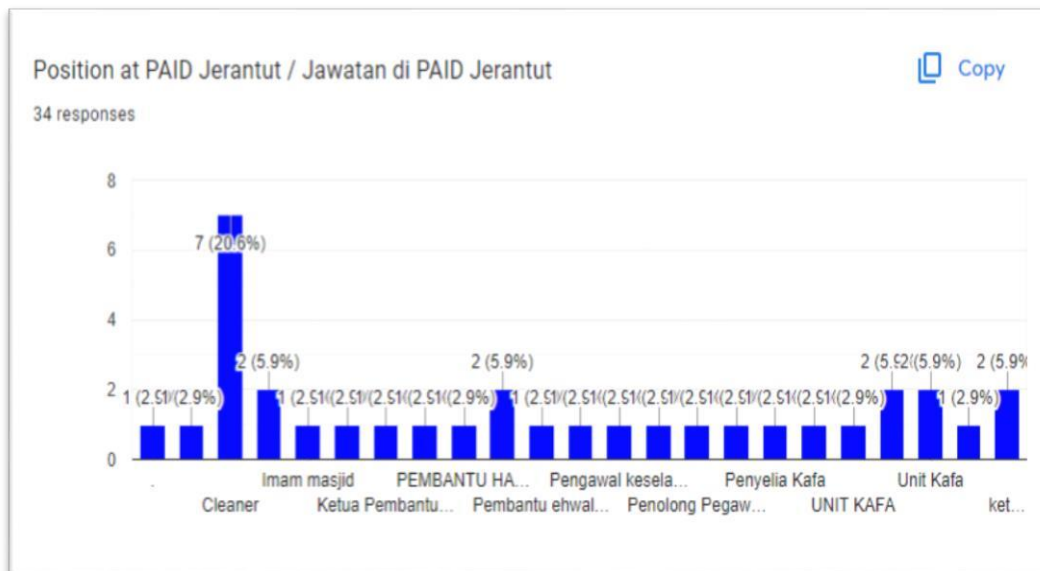


Figure 1: Position at PAID Jerantut

Based on the diagram above, the researcher prepares questions that need to be filled in the blanks. This is because there are too many positions to be listed in PAID Jerantut. Therefore, the researcher suggested the respondents write their respective positions. In addition, the purpose of this section is to prove that the respondent is from PAID Jerantut staff. Respondents only need to write their position in this section. From the diagram, there are some respondents who work as cleaners, mosque imams, Kelas Al-Quran dan Fardu Ain (KAFA) units, halal units and many more.

Income Per Month

Table 3 below shows the frequency distribution data and percentage of respondents from income per month. According to the table, there are a total of 22 people which is 64.7% of the respondents who have RM1000-RM2500 per month. Next, the second highest percentage is 17.6% which has a frequency of 6 which means their monthly income is around RM2600-RM3300. 11.8% of the income percentage is RM5000 and above which is a total of 4 respondents. The lowest percentage of income is 5.9% where the income range is RM4200-

RM4900 which is only 2 respondents in that range. So, the total number of respondents in 34 people. From the percentage below, it shows respondents who earn RM1000-RM2500 more than others. This may be due to the number of PAID Jerantut respondents being from low-ranking officials.

Table 3: Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Respondents by Income Per Month

Income Per Month	Frequency	Percent
RM1000 - RM2500	22	64.7
RM2600 - RM3300	6	17.6
RM4200 - RM4900	2	5.9
RM5000 and above	4	11.8
Total	34	100.0

Descriptive Analysis (Part B: Factors of Insensitivity to Zakat Fitrah)

Lack of awareness the cause of insensitivity to zakat fitrah

Table 4: Lack of Awareness the Cause of Insensitivity to Zakat Fitrah

Is lack of awareness the cause of insensitivity to zakat fitrah?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Moderate	3	8.8	8.8	8.8
	Agree	21	61.8	61.8	70.6
	Strongly Agree	10	29.4	29.4	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Based on table 4 above, 21 respondents (61.8%) answered agree and a total of 10 respondents (29.4%) answered strongly agree which shows the lack of awareness about the importance of zakat fitrah causing the community to be insensitive about the importance of zakat fitrah. Next, there are 3 respondents (8.8%) who answered moderate maybe because they think the community is aware of the importance of zakat fitrah but they choose to ignore it.

Lack of transparency in the collection of zakat fitrah cause individuals not to care about the importance of zakat fitrah

Table 5: Lack of Transparency in The Collection of Zakat Fitrah Cause Individuals Not to Care About the Importance of Zakat Fitrah

Does the lack of transparency in the collection of zakat fitrah cause individuals not to care about the importance of zakat fitrah?		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	6	17.6	17.6	17.6
	Moderate	4	11.8	11.8	29.4
	Agree	16	47.1	47.1	76.5
	Strongly Agree	8	23.5	23.5	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Based on table 5, a total of 16 respondents, 47.1% answered agree with this question. This may be because they do not want to see the transparency in the zakat fitrah transaction that is done. Next, 8 respondents (23.5%) strongly agree about this question because they think lack of transparency is a factor of insensitivity to zakat fitrah. While there were 6 respondents (17.6%) and 4 respondents (11.8%) answered disagree and moderate. This may be because lack of transparency is not a factor that drives the lack of awareness about the importance of zakat fitrah. They believe in the zakat fitrah transaction they do without having proof of where the money will be channeled.

Financial challenges influence individuals to pay zakat fitrah

Table 6: Financial Challenges Influence Individuals to Pay Zakat Fitrah

Do financial challenges influence individuals to pay zakat fitrah?		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Moderate	8	23.5	23.5	23.5
	Agree	24	70.6	70.6	94.1
	Strongly Agree	2	5.9	5.9	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

The table above shows that a total of 24 respondents (70.6%) agree that financial challenges are a factor in a person not paying attention to zakat fitrah. The second highest percentage is 23.5% which is a total of 8 respondents answering moderate. This may be because they are unable to ascertain whether this challenge is a factor that drives the level of awareness of zakat fitrah. Finally, a total of 2 respondents (5.9%) strongly agreed with this question. This proves that only a minority of respondents strongly agree that financial challenges are a factor in a person's awareness of the importance of zakat fitrah. Maybe it's because they have money management problems that make them think that way.

Lack of trust in zakat collection institutions the reason why someone does not care about zakat payment

Table 7: Lack of Trust in Zakat Collection Institutions the Reason Why Someone Does Not Care About Zakat Payment

Is lack of trust in zakat collection institutions the reason why someone does not care about zakat payment?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Disagree	5	14.7	14.7	17.6
	Moderate	9	26.5	26.5	44.1
	Agree	14	41.2	41.2	85.3
	Strongly Agree	5	14.7	14.7	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Based on this question, the highest percentage answered by the respondents was agree which is 14 respondents (41.2%). The second highest percentage chosen by the respondents was 9 respondents (26.5%) answered moderately. This may be because they are not sure if the zakat institution is reliable or not. A total of 5 respondents answered disagree and strongly agree which makes both answers have 14.7%. Finally, only 1 respondent (2.9%) answered strongly disagreed. This may be because this respondent feels that he trusts the zakat collection center when paying zakat fitrah and at the same time thinks that a lack of trust in zakat institutions is not a factor in someone not being aware of the importance of zakat fitrah.

Lack of knowledge about how to calculate zakat affect a person's insensitivity to zakat fitrah

Table 8: Lack of Knowledge About How to Calculate Zakat Affect a Person's Insensitivity to Zakat Fitrah

Does lack of knowledge about how to calculate zakat affect a person's insensitivity to zakat fitrah?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Disagree	3	8.8	8.8	11.8
	Moderate	9	26.5	26.5	38.2
	Agree	14	41.2	41.2	79.4
	Strongly Agree	7	20.6	20.6	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

In table 8, a total of 34 respondents have answered this questionnaire. The highest percentage obtained was 41.2%, which is a total of 14 people who agreed that lack of knowledge about how to calculate zakat fitrah is a factor in the lack of awareness of the importance of zakat fitrah. Next, a total of 9 respondents (26.5%) answered moderate to this question. This may be because they are not sure about this factor. Third, as many as 20.6% which is 7 respondents

strongly agree that knowing how to calculate zakat can reduce the level of awareness about the importance of zakat fitrah. While there were 3 respondents (8.8%) and 1 respondent (2.9%) answered disagree and strongly disagree. This is likely that they also do not know how to calculate zakat fitrah but they do not ignore the obligation.

Solution of How to Increase the Level of Awareness of the Importance of Zakat

Analysis on Solution of How to Increase the Level of Awareness of Importance of Zakat

Table 9: Solution of How to Increase the Level of Awareness of Importance of Zakat

Num.	Solution Of How to Increase the Level of Awareness of Importance of Zakat	Mean Score	Interpretation
1	Prioritize Religion	4.25	High
2	Provide Evidence to Public	4.18	High
3	Role of Zakat Institution	4.11	High

According to the table above, there are three solutions to increase the level of awareness about the importance of zakat fitrah. The highest recorded solution is prioritizing religion which has an average mean score of 4.25. Based on this score, we can conclude that prioritizing religion is one of the main keys to raising awareness of the importance of zakat. The reason for the circumstance when everyone makes religion the main guide, it is certain that every Muslim will obey all orders. In this context, when every Muslim obeys the order of Allah SWT to pay zakat fitrah, then the collection of zakat fitrah will increase and be able to distribute it to those who deserve to receive the zakat (Atabik, 2016).

The second highest mean score for the solution of ways to increase the level of awareness about the importance of zakat fitrah is in the section provide evidence to public with a value of 4.18. This also shows a score at a high level if seen in the interpretation column. The results of this finding show that most of the respondents agree that the zakat institution need to presents evidence about the validity of the zakat institution and the responsible party must also provide proof of where the money will be channeled. This process needs to be done to convince the payers so that they can remove the doubts from their minds. In the context of confidence, even if we are confident in a certain situation, we can add to that confidence with other confidence. This argument can be supported through a proposition:

الْيَقِينُ لَا يَزُولُ إِلَّا بِالْيَقِينِ

“Confidence is not removed except with a confidence too”

Based on this proposition, even if we are confident, we can add more to that confidence with more convincing evidence. For example, we are already confident with the zakat institution when we want to pay zakat fitrah, but we become more confident when the zakat institution presents evidence about the transaction that took place by showing evidence that the payment money will be channeled to the poor (Rusli, 2019).

Finally, based on the analysis of solutions to increase the level of awareness about the importance of zakat fitrah, the lowest mean score is 4.11 which is in the role of zakat institution section. Despite being at the lowest score, this score still shows a high score. This is because respondents think that this solution is still relevant to be done by zakat institutions to increase the level of awareness among Muslims. According to Fathony (2018), zakat institutions should actively spread advertisements about any zakat concept to open the eyes of the public to the importance of zakat. The party should find and do various ways to spread the importance of zakat to all groups, especially to those who have a fixed income. Doing the advertising is also one of da'wah because the institution of zakat invites Muslims to channel money in the way of Allah SWT. This is one of the important teachings of Islam because it coincides with a verse of the Qur'an:

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ ۚ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

"Call to the way of your Lord (O Muhammad) with the wisdom of wisdom and the advice of good teaching and argue with them (to whom you call) in a better way; Indeed, your Lord is the One who knows best about those who stray from His path, and He is the One who knows best about those who are guided."

(an-Nahl: 125)

Conclusion

In general, this study examines the factor affecting sensitivity of zakat payment and the possible solution on how to increase awareness of importance of zakat among staff in PAID Jerantut. There are three main objectives of this research. The first objective is to investigate the level of awareness of importance of zakat fitrah among staff in PAID Jerantut. The second objective is to identify the factors of insensitivity of zakat fitrah and the third is to propose educational solutions on how to increase the awareness of importance of zakat fitrah. All the objectives have been achieved successfully. In summary, zakat fitrah holds immense importance in Islam. It is not only a means of purifying our fasts during Ramadan but also a significant act that fosters community solidarity and ensures that everyone, regardless of their financial situation, can partake in the joyous Eid celebration. By giving zakat fitrah, we assist those in need, helping to alleviate poverty and hunger within our communities. This act of charity upholds a sunnah practice that reflects the core values of compassion, empathy, and social responsibility, which are central to Islamic teachings.

Moreover, zakat fitrah serves as a reminder of the interconnection of the Muslim ummah, reinforcing the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood. It emphasizes the collective responsibility of Muslims to support one another and promote social justice. By fulfilling this obligation, we contribute to a more equitable society, where wealth is redistributed to benefit those who are less fortunate. In essence, zakat fitrah is a powerful expression of faith that encompasses both spiritual purification and practical support for the needy. It embodies the principles of generosity and kindness, encouraging Muslims to look beyond their own needs and consider the welfare of others. Through this act, we not only seek Allah's blessings and forgiveness but also strive to create a more compassionate and inclusive community.

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