

The Bureaucratization of Zakāt and the Illusion of Justice: Symbolic Politics in Indonesia

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Abstract

This article presents a critical interrogation of the transformation of zakāt in Indonesia, examining the shift in its function from a theological ethical imperative to an administrative instrument laden with symbolism. By analyzing the legal framework, public campaigns, BAZNAS reports, and enriched by in-depth interviews, the study reveals that the current practice of zakāt fails to ensure substantive justice. Instead, the process gives rise to a performative narrative that showcases success as a strategy for institutional moral legitimization. Drawing a theoretical lens from Timur Kuran and John Rawls, the research argues that the selection of mustahik is distorted; recipients are chosen based on their readiness to participate in visual logic, rather than on the depth of their need. Zakāt now operates as a field of representation, determining who is constructed as "empowered" and who is silenced. These findings call for the institutionalization of the 'theology of discomfort', where performance indicators must prioritize inclusion over spectacle, and zakāt institutions must recognize unquantifiable vulnerabilities (such as trauma and social exclusion). The article concludes with a call for the reclaiming of the radical ethic of zakāt, focusing on the mustahik who are unheard and unaccounted for in the dominant narrative of success.

Keywords: Zakāt; Substantive Justice; Administrative Performativity; Theology of Discomfort; Field of Representation.

Abstrak

Artikel ini menyajikan interogasi kritis terhadap transformasi zakāt di Indonesia, meneliti pergeseran fungsinya dari imperatif etika teologis menjadi instrumen administratif sarat simbolisme. Dengan menganalisis kerangka hukum, kampanye publik, laporan BAZNAS, dan diperkaya wawancara mendalam, studi ini mengungkap bahwa praktik zakāt gagal menjamin keadilan substantif. Sebaliknya, proses tersebut melahirkan narasi performatif yang menampilkan keberhasilan sebagai strategi legitimasi moral kelembagaan. Mengambil lensa teoritis Timur Kuran dan John Rawls, penelitian ini berargumen bahwa seleksi mustahik terdistorsi; penerima dipilih berdasarkan kesiapan untuk berpartisipasi dalam logika visual, bukan berdasarkan kedalaman kebutuhan. Zakāt kini beroperasi sebagai medan representasi, menentukan

siapa yang dikonstruksi sebagai "berdaya" dan siapa yang dibungkam. Temuan ini menyerukan institusionalisasi 'teologi ketidaknyamanan' (theology of discomfort), di mana indikator kinerja harus memprioritaskan inklusi atas pertunjukan, dan lembaga zakāt harus mengakui kerentanan yang tidak terukur (seperti trauma dan eksklusi sosial). Artikel ini menyimpulkan dengan seruan bagi pengambilalihan kembali etika zakāt yang radikal, berfokus pada mustahik yang tidak terdengar dan tidak terhitung dalam narasi keberhasilan dominan.

Kata Kunci: Zakāt; Keadilan Substantif; Performativitas Administratif; Teologi Ketidaknyamanan; Medan Representasi.

INTRODUCTION

It can be argued that no concept holds a more entrenched position within Islamic economics than zakāt. Its authority derives from its mention in the Qur'an and its elaboration in the hadith, and its teaching is deeply rooted since the time Muslim children first enter the *madrasa*.¹ Among the *ulamā*, zakāt has been interpreted as an instrument for realizing social justice and is believed to remain so.² Unfortunately, this conceptual stability begins to falter when confronted with the bureaucratization of zakāt, a modern phenomenon often celebrated as progress but laden with complex theoretical and practical problems. For example, the bureaucratization of productive zakāt in practice adopts the language of conventional development, characterized by administrative selection, result-based evaluation, and even business proposals.

On the other hand, vulnerable and poor groups who cannot write proposals, lack social security, or possess no relevant skills remain invisible within this larger narrative. As a result, zakāt begins to feel estranged—Islamic in terminology but distant from the principle of substantive justice. Empirically, institutional reports rarely mention those who remain unreached; success stories are far more appealing to present than epistemic failures. At the same time, studies on zakāt remain dominated by two main approaches: first, the normative *fiqh* approach, focusing on the classification of *mustahik* (rightful zakāt recipients, primarily the poor and socially vulnerable, as defined by Islamic law) and the calculation of *nisab*; second, the managerial approach, which evaluates institutional effectiveness and the success of productive zakāt programs. Meanwhile, academic studies have yet to engage meaningfully with zakāt as a symbolic arena where the state, religious authorities, and market mechanisms construct narratives of justice through visual

¹ M Umer Chapra, *Islamic Economics: What It Is and How It Developed* (Jeddah, 2000).

² Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi, *Role of the State in the Economy: An Islamic Perspective* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2010).

representation and administrative reporting. Therefore, in modern practice, zakāt appears to have shifted from an ethics of distribution to an arena of representation.

Although various practical problems have raised suspicions about the direction of modern zakāt distribution, academic studies that attempt to examine the dimensions of exclusion and representation remain scarce. Most research continues to focus on effectiveness, management, or formal *shari'ah* calculations, while questions about who is left behind by the distribution system are rarely explored in depth. As evidence, Othman and Mohd Noor introduced the conceptual model of Non-Recipients of Zakāt Funds (NRZF) to identify groups of *mustahik* excluded from the formal zakāt distribution system,³ yet their work has not been supported by comprehensive empirical studies. R. Sumantri applied the CIBEST method to evaluate the effectiveness of zakāt distribution in South Sumatra but also failed to reveal who was excluded from the system.⁴ The study by Khairunnisa and Fuadi examined the factors contributing to the success of productive *mustahik*,⁵ yet it similarly ignored those who were undocumented. Andiani's thesis on "Digital Inclusion" through *laku pandai* agents mentioned inequalities in access but stopped at that stage without expanding the discourse on groups that do not receive zakāt.⁶

At the global level, Sabzian and his colleagues introduced an agent-based simulation model for zakāt distribution and its implications for inequality,⁷ yet the symbolic approach to zakāt—as an instrument of institutional legitimacy—remains rarely been explored. In addition, Aisyah and Ismail only highlighted the inclusive principles of zakāt distribution in the classical tradition, offering a normative comparison with modern approaches.⁸ The study by Sri Herianingrum and her colleagues empirically examined zakāt as an instrument for poverty alleviation but provided little critique of the closed distribution mechanism.⁹ Prawatya and Primada also compared zakāt and Islamic financing in relation to inclusive growth but did not touch upon the symbolic—

³ Azhana bt Othman and Abd Halim bin Mohd Noor, "Non Recipients of Zakat Funds(NRZF) and Its Impact on the Performance of Zakat Institution: A Conceptual Model," in *2011 IEEE Colloquium on Humanities, Science and Engineering* (IEEE, 2011), 568–73, doi:10.1109/CHUSER.2011.6163797.

⁴ Rinol Sumantri, "Efektifitas Dana Zakat Pada Mustahik Zakat Community Development Sumatera Selatan Dengan Pendekatan CIBEST," *I-ECONOMICS: A Research Journal on Islamic Economics* 3, no. 2 (January 2018): 209, doi:10.19109/ieconomics.v3i2.1688.

⁵ Fairuz Nur Khairunnisa and Ariza Fuadi, "Analisis Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Peningkatan Kesejahteraan Mustahik Melalui Pendayagunaan Zakat Produktif (Studi Terhadap Penerima Zakat Produktif Di Dompot Dhuafa Provinsi Jawa Tengah)" (Universitas Diponegoro, 2019).

⁶ Kartika Andiani, "Strategi Penghimpunan Dan Pendistribusian Zakat Melalui Agen Laku Pandai Untuk Mencapai Inklusi Zakat Di Indonesia" (Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB), 2018).

⁷ Hossein Sabzian et al., "Economic Inequality and Islamic Charity: An Exploratory Agent-Based Modeling Approach" (Cornell University Press, April 2018), doi:https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1804.09284.

⁸ Siti Aisyah and Nurizal Ismail, "The Distribution of Zakat at The Time of Caliph Umar Ibn Khattab," *Al-Iktisab: Journal of Islamic Economic Law* 3, no. 2 (November 2019), doi:10.21111/al-iktisab.v3i2.3908.

⁹ Sri Herianingrum et al., "Zakat as an Instrument of Poverty Reduction in Indonesia," *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research* 15, no. 4 (March 2024): 643–60, doi:10.1108/JIABR-11-2021-0307.

administrative dimension of distribution.¹⁰ At the same time, a methodological breakthrough can be found in the work of Lendie Follett and Heath Henderson, who introduced a hybrid targeting model that combines proxy means testing and community-based targeting through a Bayesian approach.¹¹ This method is relevant for identifying and addressing problems of elite capture and inaccurate representation. Follett and Henderson also used the capabilities approach to map the most vulnerable groups who are often excluded by administrative selection criteria.¹²

Furthermore, institutional studies have begun to engage with the symbolic-cognitive legitimacy framework, as demonstrated in the recent work of Suqiang Ge, to understand how visual and administrative structures reinforce the institutional image of justice.¹³ Nu Htay and Salman emphasize the role of financial report transparency in building public legitimacy – but they also highlight that those absent from such reports rarely receive recognition.¹⁴ Meanwhile, SEM-based research by Abror and Hidayati shows that perceptions of distributive justice significantly affect *muḥakki* trust, revealing the powerful role of administrative selection in determining who is deemed worthy and successful.¹⁵ Ironically, a recent bibliometric study by Riani and Ikhwan finds that themes of symbolism, institutional legitimacy, and epistemic failure are scarcely addressed in nearly 500 Scopus-indexed publications, underscoring the urgency of this research.¹⁶ From the literature mapping above, very few studies approach zakāt as a symbolic arena or as a field where the state, religious authorities, and the market co-construct narratives of justice.

Building on the above studies, the recent work of Shikur and Maysyaroh highlights a thematic void surrounding symbolism and moral legitimacy in modern zakāt research,¹⁷ opening up space to bring Timur Kuran's analysis as a compelling theoretical framework. Nu Htay and Salman demonstrate that administrative visualization – through audits and reporting – actually reinforces

¹⁰ Nurrahma Prawatya and Laila Masruro Pimada, "Zakat vs. Islamic Banking: Examining the Differential Impact on Inclusive Growth in Indonesia," *Journal of Economic Cooperation and Development* 45, no. 2 (2024): 235–70.

¹¹ Lendie Follett and Heath Henderson, "A Hybrid Approach to Targeting Social Assistance," *Journal of Development Economics* 160 (January 2023): 103002, doi:10.1016/j.jdeveco.2022.103002.

¹² Heath Henderson and Lendie Follett, "Targeting Social Safety Net Programs on Human Capabilities," *World Development* 151 (March 2022): 105741, doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105741.

¹³ Suqiang Ge, "The Legitimacy Mechanism of Symbolic Structures and Institutional Models" (SRRN, 2025).

¹⁴ S N N Htay and Syed Ahmed Salman, "Proposed Best Practices of Financial Information Disclosure for Zakat Institutions: A Case Study of Malaysia," *World Applied Sciences Journal* 30, no. 30 (2014), doi:10.5829/idosi.wasj.2014.30.icmrp.37.

¹⁵ Arsyad Abror and Ataina Hidayati, "The Effect of Distributive Justice on Intention to Pay Zakat through Zakat Institutions Using Affective and Cognitive Trust as Intervening Variables," *Jurnal Ekonomi & Keuangan Islam* 6, no. 1 (January 2020): 24–33, doi:10.20885/jeki.vol6.iss1.art3.

¹⁶ Ririn Riani and Ihsanul Ikhwan, "The Development of Zakat Literature: A Systematic Review and Paths for Future Research," *6th Indonesian Conference of Zakat Proceedings*, no. 2013 (2022).

¹⁷ Anwar Adem Shikur and Siti Maysyaroh, "Review on Zakat Core Principles (ZCP) Literatures," *Islamic Social Finance* 3, no. 1 (August 2023), doi:10.58968/isf.v3i1.234.

institutional legitimacy, but only for those officially recorded.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the distributive justice metrics employed by Abror and Hudayati indicate that extensive reporting systems – metrics and rankings, may limit the space for those who fail to pass administrative screening.¹⁹ On the other hand, Baidhawiy provides a normative foundation, asserting that Islamic justice demands structural inclusion of mustahik – a vision absent in current formal distribution practices.²⁰ Bibliometric reviews by Mu'adzah and Rachmad, as well as Alam et al., support the narrative that zakāt research has yet to expose representational failure, affirming the urgency of a critical reassessment of moral legitimacy in contemporary zakāt distribution.²¹ In response, Timur Kuran's view of Islamic economics as a symbolic project²² has not yet been deployed to trace how zakāt functions as a strategy of legitimation. Similarly, John Rawls's principles of distributive justice,²³ remain underutilized as a critical instrument to question who truly benefits from the current zakāt system.

Based on the literature mapping above, this study seeks to open that gap by posing two central questions: does bureaucratized zakāt still serve the cause of justice or merely present a

¹⁸ Htay and Salman, "Proposed Best Practices of Financial Information Disclosure for Zakat Institutions: A Case Study of Malaysia."

¹⁹ Abror and Hudayati, "The Effect of Distributive Justice on Intention to Pay Zakat through Zakat Institutions Using Affective and Cognitive Trust as Intervening Variables."

²⁰ Zakiyuddin Baedhawiy, "Distributive Principles of Economic Justice: An Islamic Perspective," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 2, no. 2 (December 2012): 241, doi:10.18326/ijims.v2i2.241-266.

²¹ Nadiyah Mu'adzah and Dedy Rachmad, "Criticisms The Government's Role of Zakat Regulation in Indonesia for Improving the Zakat Potential," *Islamic Social Finance* 4, no. 1 (2024), doi:10.58968/isf.v4i1.497; Azhar Alam et al., "Trust Studies of Zakat Institutions: A Systematic Review for Future Research Direction," *International Journal of Emerging Issues in Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (December 2023): 1–15, doi:10.31098/ijeis.v3i2.1419.

²² Timur Kuran offers a trenchant critique of Islamic economics by framing it not as a genuine effort to transform economic structures, but as a symbolic project aimed at reaffirming Muslim identity in the modern world. In *Islam and Mammon*, he argues that Islamic economics does not primarily seek to promote economic efficiency or development; rather, it functions as a cultural marker that reassures Muslims of their distinctiveness in the face of Western dominance (Kuran 2004, 155). According to Kuran, core concepts such as interest prohibition (*riba*) and *zakāt*-based redistribution are upheld less for their practical viability than for their rhetorical and emotional appeal – they represent utopian ideals that are difficult to implement but powerful in signaling moral superiority (Kuran 2004, 9–11). This symbolism, he contends, is central: Islamic economics operates more as a discourse of authenticity and communal solidarity, especially in postcolonial contexts, than as a coherent or empirically grounded system (Kuran 1995). Even when confronting the empirical inefficacy of Islamic financial institutions, Kuran views their persistence as driven by identity politics, not economic logic. As he writes elsewhere, Islamic economics is "a chapter in the politics of Muslim identity," where moral vocabulary often masks a lack of structural innovation (Kuran 1997). See: Timur Kuran, *Islam and Mammon: The Economic Predicaments of Islamism* (Princeton University Press, 2004); Timur Kuran, "The Islamic Sub-economy: A Reply," *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 27, no. 1 (1995): 145–149; and Timur Kuran, "The Genesis of Islamic Economics: A Chapter in the Politics of Muslim Identity," *Social Research* 64, no. 2 (1997): 301–338.

²³ John Rawls's principles of distributive justice, articulated most comprehensively in *A Theory of Justice* (1971), are foundational in modern political philosophy for reconciling liberty with equality. Central to Rawls's theory is the "difference principle", which allows for social and economic inequalities only if they benefit the least advantaged members of society. This principle is derived from a hypothetical "original position," in which rational agents, behind a veil of ignorance, choose rules of justice without knowing their future status, class, or abilities. Such a formulation is designed to ensure fairness, as it removes personal bias from the design of social institutions. Rawls distinguishes his approach from utilitarianism by emphasizing the inviolability of individual rights and the moral arbitrariness of birth and social position, insisting that distributive outcomes must be justified by their effects on the most disadvantaged. His theory offers not only a philosophical justification for progressive redistribution but also a critique of systems that

polished face of moral virtue? Furthermore, if this system does not side with the most voiceless groups, then what kind of justice are we truly celebrating? This research employs a qualitative–interpretive approach, examining institutional documents, public campaign narratives, and the administrative logic embedded in mustahik selection. The aim is not to negate the role of zakāt, but to reveal how justice can be simulated symbolically. Accordingly, the primary contribution of this study is to read zakāt not merely as the distribution of communal funds, but as a political arena of representation of who speaks in the name of Islam, and who is silenced in the name of justice.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive approach grounded in critical inquiry.²⁴ It examines how zakāt is represented and legitimized within bureaucratic and aesthetic frameworks, focusing less on efficiency and more on meaning. The research uses document analysis and semiotic discourse analysis, reading laws, institutional reports, and visual materials as instruments of moral representation. Main sources include Law No. 23 of 2011, Ministerial Regulation No. 31 of 2019, and the 2023 BAZNAS Annual Report, complemented by posters, campaign materials, and interviews conducted in September 2025 with zakāt officials, prospective mustahik, and scholars. Conceptually, the analysis draws on Timur Kuran’s critique of Islamic economics as a symbolic identity project and John Rawls’s theory of distributive justice. Kuran explains how zakāt produces legitimacy while distancing itself from structural inequality, whereas Rawls provides a lens to assess whether justice benefits the least advantaged. Together, these perspectives illuminate how the aesthetics of empowerment make certain groups visible while leaving others unseen. Rather than claiming to represent all experiences, the study seeks to reveal how zakāt operates as a moral narrative that defines not only who receives assistance but also who becomes visible within the public image of Islamic justice. In doing so, it follows Flyvbjerg’s notion of *phronetic social science*,

naturalize inequality under the guise of merit or market efficiency. See: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. (MA, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). Especially §§11–17, 46–51; and John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, ed. Erin Kelly (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

²⁴ Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Sage Publications, 2017); Joe L. Kincheloe and Peter McLaren, “Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research,” in *Key Works in Critical Pedagogy* (Rotterdam: SensePublishers, 2011), 285–326, doi:10.1007/978-94-6091-397-6_23; Mats Alvesson and Kaj Skoldberg, *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research* (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2025), doi:https://doi.org/10.4135/9781036211523.

emphasizing the ethical orientation of inquiry that asks not only what zakāt does, but whether it contributes to what is good and just.²⁵

DISCUSSION

The Framework of Bureaucratization

Reading Law Number 23 of 2011 and Regulation Number 31 of 2019 from the Ministry of Religious Affairs reveals a deep change in the meaning of zakāt. It has moved from a moral duty based on solidarity to an administrative system built on proposals, audits, and performance indicators. What was once a spiritual expression has turned into a bureaucratic process where spirituality is replaced by measurement.²⁶ Compliance and reporting now serve not only for transparency but also as a form of control, ensuring that zakāt fits within the state governance structure. It aims for order rather than liberation. In this system, access to zakāt is no longer based on real need but on administrative readiness. The productive zakāt program favors those who can write proposals, hold certificates, or show business potential. Those who cannot, often the most vulnerable, remain invisible. Justice in this setting becomes an administrative matter, something recorded, audited, and displayed. It becomes a paradox—Islamic in appearance but technocratic in practice where virtue is proven by paperwork and worth is measured by compliance.

This situation echoes Timur Kuran's critique that Islamic economics, while claiming moral superiority, often functions as a symbolic project that maintains identity rather than addressing inequality.²⁷ Dashboards and reports highlight empowerment, yet these visual achievements hide the silence of those left unrecorded. From John Rawls's perspective, this system fails the basic moral test.²⁸ If inequality must benefit those most disadvantaged, then zakāt today has reversed that principle, rewarding administrative readiness instead of true need. The tools meant to bring justice now only imitate it. At the policy level, the National Sharia Financial Strategy places zakāt within the national plan for Islamic economic growth alongside banking, sukuk, and the halal industry.²⁹ In this vision, zakāt becomes part of fiscal infrastructure rather than an ethical movement for redistribution. The BAZNAS Annual Report strengthens this image through neat metrics and

²⁵ Bent Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), doi:10.1017/CBO9780511810503.

²⁶ UU Republik Indonesia, "UU RI No. 23 Tahun 2011 Tentang Pengelolaan Zakat; Peraturan Menteri Agama Republik Indonesia No. 31 Tahun 2019 Tentang Pelaksanaan Undang-Undang Zakat" (Jakarta, 2011), <http://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/39267/uu-no-23-tahun-2011>.

²⁷ Timur Kuran, *Islam and Mammon: The Economic Predicaments of Islamism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

²⁸ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard University Press, 1971).

²⁹ KNEKS, *Strategi Nasional Keuangan Syariah (SNKS)* (Jakarta, 2019).

success ratios that celebrate productivity but omit failure.³⁰ The silence in these reports is not accidental. It defines the system itself. What cannot be seen is treated as irrelevant. Through this bureaucratic and visual order, zakāt stops being a moral discourse of justice and becomes a performance of order and efficiency. Poverty is managed instead of challenged. The appearance of success replaces the substance of fairness. What emerges is the image of modern Islamic governance that shows piety through data but risks forgetting the people and voices it was meant to serve. The question is no longer whether zakāt is distributed, but whether its image of justice still speaks for those who have been made unseen.

Having examined the structural logic of zakāt, the discussion now turns to how this logic operates in everyday practice. This bureaucratic logic is not only reflected in regulations and reports but also resonates in the lived experiences of those who administer and those who seek zakāt. This bureaucratic logic is not only reflected in regulations and reports but also resonates in the lived experiences of those who administer and those who seek zakāt. A local officer of BAZNAS Yogyakarta explained,

*“We cannot simply release productive zakāt without proper procedures. Beneficiaries are required to submit a business proposal, present valid identification, and attend training. These rules are meant to guarantee accountability, but sometimes people fail because the documents are incomplete.”*³¹

His words confirm that access to zakāt is mediated by the capacity to satisfy administrative protocols rather than by the urgency of need. From the other side of this encounter, a prospective mustahik in Yogyakarta admitted,

*“I wanted to apply for capital assistance from zakāt, but the requirements were too difficult. I only sell fried snacks in front of my house, I have no proposal or financial report. When the forms became too many and training was required, I gave up, even though I really needed the money.”*³²

Here the paradox is laid bare, those most in need are often those most excluded. The same concern emerges in Maluku. Dr. Aisa Manilet, who has recently completed her doctoral research on zakāt at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, explained, *“Zakāt distribution in Maluku has not succeeded in turning mustahik into muzakki because BAZNAS lacks a monitoring system. What we need is a more relevant model of distribution.”*³³ Her observation shifts the critique from the moment of eligibility to the absence of sustainability, pointing out that justice falters not only in access but also in continuity. At a more conceptual level, Prof. Hilman Latief emphasized in a public lecture, *“The real problem of zakāt in*

³⁰ BAZNAS RI, *Laporan Tahunan BAZNAS 2023* (Jakarta, 2023).

³¹ Interview with a BAZNAS officer, Yogyakarta, 9 September 2025.

³² Interview with a prospective mustahik, Yogyakarta, 9 September 2025.

³³ Interview with Dr. Aisa Manilet, M.Ag., researcher on zakāt in Maluku, 9 September 2025.

Indonesia is that Islamic organizations do not have a clear definition of poverty. This conceptual gap is the root of our difficulties, who counts as poor is decided by administrative logic, not by social reality.”³⁴ Thus, his reflection captures the epistemological depth of the problem, zakāt fails not only in its machinery but also in its very imagination of poverty.

Governance Gains and the Limits of Inclusivity

Although much of our previous critical discussion highlighted the limitations of bureaucratization in zakāt distribution, it would be unbalanced if the important achievements of professional governance were simply ignored. BAZNAS, for example, has sought to build credibility through mechanisms of transparency, accountability, and a set of regulations designed to prevent the misuse of funds.³⁵ This effort indicates that zakāt is no longer managed sporadically but has been integrated into a modern system of oversight that is more measurable and rational.³⁶ Nevertheless, professionalism emphasized at the institutional level does not automatically guarantee substantive justice. For some prospective mustahik, procedures intended to secure institutional legitimacy instead turn into administrative barriers that hinder access. In other words, what is perceived as order by the bureaucracy is often experienced as exclusion by those who should be the most entitled to receive. This occurs because prospective mustahik do not start from the same point. Some possess adequate understanding of a series of administrative requirements, while others are not familiar with such bureaucratic logic. Differences in the level of literacy – both legal literacy and administrative literacy – make those who are less exposed or who have limited access to information more vulnerable to being overlooked. Thus, the system produces order while at the same time creating a new hierarchy, in which only those who are able to navigate administrative procedures gain opportunities, whereas others are silently marginalized.

Meanwhile, community-based initiatives run by the management of Jogokariyan Mosque in Yogyakarta reveal a different configuration. Research by Pellu shows that the zakāt distribution pattern in this mosque is supported by a more flexible form of governance, whereby small business capital is provided with light requirements, empowerment programs are expanded for the poor, and the eligibility of recipients is verified through direct observation rather than layered administrative documents.³⁷ Zayl further emphasizes that this approach does not stop at a

³⁴ Public lecture by Prof. Hilman Latief, M.A., Ph.D., delivered at the end-of-year event of Lazismu in 2020, where the institution received a national award from BAZNAS as the best-performing Laznas in zakāt, infaq, and sadaqah fundraising growth.

³⁵ Emmy Hamidiyah, Budi Margono, and Dyah R Andayani, *BAZNAS: Sebuah Perjalanan Kebangkitan Zakat*, ed. Yusuf Maulana (Jakarta: Pusat Kajian Strategis Badan Amil Zakat Nasional (PUSKAS BAZNAS), 2020).

³⁶ Monzer Kahf, *Islamic Economics and Public Finance* (Jeddah: IRTI-IsDB, 2003).

³⁷ Arifin Pellu, “Manajemen Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Masyarakat Berbasis Masjid (Studi Kasus Masjid Jogokariyan Yogyakarta)” (Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2019).

charitable function but develops into an instrument for job creation and the strengthening of household income, so that zakāt truly engages with the pulse of the community's economic needs.³⁸ Such a model is consistent with the literature on community-based welfare, which stresses social and relational proximity as sources of distributive legitimacy.³⁹ Various studies have shown that the Jogokariyan Mosque in Yogyakarta has developed from merely a place of worship into a center of community-based socio-economic empowerment.⁴⁰ Innovations in governance include the provision of social facilities, the renovation of houses for the poor, mosque-based microfinance institutions, and MSME mentoring programs measured through the *Maqasid Sharia* and the *Asnaf* Muslimpreneur Success Index, which indicated medium–high levels of business success.⁴¹ With the historical philosophy of the mosque as a center of Islamic civilization, Jogokariyan exemplifies a transformation of mosque-based philanthropy that integrates religious values with the strengthening of community economic independence. Therefore, this approach demonstrates that justice can be pursued through governance that emphasizes proximity and responsiveness while maintaining an orientation toward social sustainability.

When these two examples are read together, it becomes clear that the future of zakāt governance does not rest on a dichotomy between professionalism and community, but rather on the ability to negotiate the tension between them. Formal institutions provide a framework of transparency and accountability, while community models safeguard accessibility and strengthen relational trust. The greatest challenge is how to design a system that does not reduce justice to mere regulatory compliance but simultaneously opens space for the poor to be genuinely present as visible and served subjects. This balance – however difficult to achieve – is what distinguishes zakāt as an ethic of care from an administrative apparatus that merely controls distribution. Yet, even with such gains, the problem of inclusion remains unresolved: governance may secure

³⁸ La Abdul Zayl, “Peran Masjid Jogokariyan Dalam Mengentaskan Kemiskinan Melalui Program ZIS” (UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2025).

³⁹ John Harriss, Kristian Stokke, and Olle Törnquist, *Politicising Democracy: The New Local Politics of Democratisation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511817415>; Amelia Fauzia, “Faith and the State: A History of Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia” (Melbourne University, 2008).

⁴⁰ Letmiros, “Jogokariyan Mosque In Yogyakarta: As a Legendary And Phenomenal Agent of Change,” *International Review of Humanities Studies* 5, no. 2 (2020): 511–23.

⁴¹ Azis Muslim, “A Model of Economic Empowerment of The Urban Poor Based on the Social Responsibility of the Mosque (Summary of the Dissertation)” (UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2016); Indin Rarasati and Hanudin Amin, “The Role of Religious-Based Empowerment in Enhancing Asnaf Entrepreneurs’ Success: Evidence from Jogokariyan Mosque, Indonesia,” *International Journal of Islamic Economics and Finance (IJIEF)* 8, no. 2 (August 2025): 164–83, doi:10.18196/ijief.v8i2.27781.

transparency, but it cannot decide who deserves to be recognized as mustahik. It is precisely this question of eligibility that defines the paradox of contemporary zakāt.

Performing Justice: Bureaucratic Order and the Visual Life of Zakāt

If the previous section discussed how the state and zakāt institutions integrate zakāt into a moral project of technocratic development, this section highlights its impact on the mustahik who are supposed to be at the center of distribution. In practice, administrative logic now determines who is considered eligible to receive assistance. Requirements such as an identity card, business proposal, readiness to attend training, and proof of entrepreneurial intent have become the basis for recipient selection. The official BAZNAS form no longer asks about the level of poverty but rather the extent to which a person can be categorized as ready to be empowered. In this way, poverty must be proven and displayed in order to be recognized by the system. Data from BAZNAS Jepara show that only a small portion of ZIS funds is allocated for productive zakāt, and its distribution depends on mechanisms that assess skills and business readiness.⁴² Those living in the most vulnerable conditions, without documents or social access, are not recorded in reports and are absent from the narrative of success. This procedure creates an impression of measurable justice, whereas what actually occurs is merely a rearrangement of existing inequalities. In John Rawls's view, such a situation represents a deviation from the principle of justice that should side with the weakest. Meanwhile, Timur Kuran sees that modern Islamic economics tends to produce symbols of piety without truly realizing substantive justice.⁴³ For Rawls, this is a moral failure; for Kuran, a symbolic one. Zakāt no longer functions as an instrument of social liberation but has turned into a mechanism of regulation that determines who is recognized as successful and who remains beyond the reach of attention. The stronger the image of success constructed, the greater the distance between the system and those who are most in need.

⁴² BAZNAS Kab. Jepara, *Laporan Tabunan 2023* (Jepara, 2023).

⁴³ Timur Kuran, *The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

At this point, bureaucratization converges with aesthetics. Zakāt is no longer carried out solely as a social obligation but is curated as a symbol of progress. Success is not sought through the transformation of the mustahik's life but through an image that can be displayed and celebrated. In this shift, justice moves from experience to performance, from ethics to aesthetics. Posters, testimonials, and institutional reports become visual spaces where zakāt appears not as a process of redistribution but as a moral representation intended to convince the public.

Figure 1. Poster of Productive Zakāt and Economic Equity (Source: Visual publications of Indonesian zakāt institutions, 2024–2025)



This poster does not simply report a program; it enacts a technocratic narrative of empowerment, equity, and welfare. The mustahik is transformed into a statistical performance object, as if justice were nothing more than a development project to be measured, displayed, and archived. The textual inscription speaks the language of progress, while the visual grammar erases every trace of poverty. Smiling faces, neatly aligned bodies, certificates held up for the camera, and packages of goods arranged for display converge into an aura of empowerment. Yet the aura is fragile, for it depends on selective visibility. Those who cannot stage their success, whose documents are incomplete, or who do not fit the aesthetic of productivity remain absent. This absence is not accidental; it is constitutive.⁴⁴ What the audience sees is not justice but the performance of justice, a spectacle of institutional legitimacy. In semiotic terms, the poster belongs to a broader regime of visibility, in which religion and development merge into symbols of stability. As Nicholas Mirzoeff reminds us, visual regimes organize what is allowed to be seen and what must

⁴⁴ In *Formations of the Secular*, Talal Asad explores how modern power – especially as exercised by secular states and institutional frameworks – regulates the moral visibility of subjects. He argues that forms of suffering or dissent that do not conform to prevailing narratives of progress, redemption, or moral legibility are often excluded from the public sphere. The claim that there is no space to show failure, resistance, or the vulnerability of *mustahik* reflects Asad's notion that only certain types of moral subjects are permitted to appear – those that reinforce administrative rationality, public harmony, and symbolic order. See: Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford University Press, 2003).

remain unseen,⁴⁵ while David Morgan shows how religious images create and discipline moral perception. In this sense, justice becomes not what is lived but what is seen, not what is shared but what is staged.⁴⁶ At the same time, zakāt is consistently narrated in heroic terms, for having empowered many to achieve economic independence. Behind that, however, are communities who remain unseen: those without ID cards, unable to write business proposals. From the image above, inequality is sanitized by showcasing selective fragments of success. Simultaneously, institutions are often represented as the very actors of justice (see Figure 2). The proliferation of such images is meant to signify that zakāt distribution is functioning justly.



Figure 2. Poster of Institutional Representation as Actors of Justice (source: visual publication of Indonesian zakāt institution (2024–2025))

The photograph of zakāt distribution beneath the national emblem and the BAZNAS logo conveys a carefully staged scene of bureaucratic order. The plain background erases everyday context, while the formal handover of a document highlights procedure rather than encounter. The *mustahik* is visible, yet silent, appearing not as a subject of transformation but as evidence of institutional performance. What the viewer is invited to see is the authority of the institution, not the vulnerability of the recipient. This interpretation resonates with Timothy Mitchell's notion of

⁴⁵ Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Duke University Press, 2011), doi:10.1515/9780822393726.

⁴⁶ David Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice* (University of California Press, 2005).

the modern state as a “theatre of order,” where legitimacy is enacted through bureaucratic gestures.⁴⁷ Talal Asad reminds us that such visibility is regulated by power, which decides whose suffering may appear in public and whose must remain hidden.⁴⁸ Nicholas Mirzoeff describes this dynamic as a visual regime,⁴⁹ while David Morgan shows how religious images discipline the moral gaze.⁵⁰ In the field of Islamic philanthropy, Amy Singer and Jonathan Benthall have demonstrated that charity often functions less as redistribution and more as political legitimation.⁵¹ From this perspective, the photograph exemplifies how zakāt today is reframed from a social relation into a bureaucratic performance: justice is not lived but staged, not shared but displayed. In Timur Kuran’s terms, this is a form of the “stage of modern Islam,” where religion is converted into a visibility that sustains symbolic stability.⁵² And in Rawlsian language, this is a systemic failure: for when justice exists only in visuals, and not in the lived experiences of the most vulnerable, then the system is unjust – no matter how beautifully it appears.⁵³ These images depict zakāt as a moral stage, not a field of justice.

Narrating Success, Silencing Disruption: The Politics of Representation

Zakāt institutions today are no longer mere distributors of funds; they have become curators of narratives and producers of visual legitimacy. Through annual reports, social media posts, and campaign videos, they present smiling faces, success stories, and numbers of achievement. These images do not appear by coincidence; they are carefully designed to display success, sustain public trust, and affirm institutional authority. The role of zakāt thus moves from the distribution of justice to the management of representation. What circulates is not poverty but its aesthetic resolution, stories that can be narrated, captured, and consumed, while failure quietly disappears from the public gaze. The visual order of zakāt constructs a moral imagination in which empowerment replaces vulnerability. As Peter Jan Margry notes, religious imagery shapes a public journey of belief,⁵⁴ while Nandita Dogra explains that humanitarian visuals often serve organizational credibility more than social truth.⁵⁵ The same logic applies here: the image of the empowered

⁴⁷ Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (University of California Press, 1991).

⁴⁸ Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*.

⁴⁹ Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*.

⁵⁰ Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice*.

⁵¹ Amy Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies* (Cambridge University Press, 2008); Jonathan Benthall, “Financial Worship: The Quranic Injunction to Almsgiving,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 5, no. 1 (March 1999): 27, doi:10.2307/2660961.

⁵² Kuran, *Islam and Mammon: The Economic Predicaments of Islamism*, 2004.

⁵³ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*.

⁵⁴ Peter Jan Margry, “The Visual Language of Pilgrimage and Donation,” in *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World: New Itineraries Into the Sacred*, ed. Peter Jan Margry (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008).

⁵⁵ Nandita Dogra, “Reading NGOs Visually”—Implications of Visual Images for NGO Management,” *Journal of International Development* 19, no. 2 (March 2007): 161–71, doi:10.1002/jid.1307.

mustahik becomes a symbol of institutional virtue. In this structure of visibility, truth aligns with what can be claimed as fact, as Michel Foucault reminds us, and religion becomes a symbolic system that produces legitimacy rather than transformation,⁵⁶ as argued by Timur Kuran. This aesthetic economy creates what Lauren Berlant calls cruel optimism, a promise of empowerment that rarely reaches those who remain unseen.⁵⁷ Exclusion does not occur through open denial but through silence. Only those who fit the visual language of success appear in the frame; the rest remain invisible. What emerges is a regime of truth in which the impact of zakāt is measured not by the reality of justice but by what can be publicly narrated as success.

Viewed through John Rawls's principle of justice, such a system fails to prioritize the least advantaged. Justice becomes confined to what can be documented, displayed, and celebrated. In this framework, zakāt no longer confronts inequality but curates its moral image. Recognition replaces redistribution, echoing Axel Honneth's idea of justice as a struggle for social visibility.⁵⁸ The unrecorded poor are not unworthy; they are simply outside the frame of what can be narrated. Market rationality deepens this transformation. Zakāt becomes part of the economy of attention, competing for public trust and digital engagement. What was once an act of devotion now takes on the aesthetic of corporate religiosity, combining managerial discipline with moral display. In the view of Talal Asad, this marks the reformation of religion within the rationalities of the state and the market.⁵⁹ Zakāt becomes a political instrument that manages poverty, regulates social

⁵⁶ The claim that *zakāt* distribution prioritizes those who can be displayed as empowered, rather than those who are substantively empowered, reflects Michel Foucault's insight into the entanglement of power and truth. In *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault argues that in modern societies, truth is not simply what is factually accurate – it is what can be produced, certified, and circulated as fact within dominant regimes of knowledge. Thus, “empowerment” is no longer a material outcome but a representational performance that fits institutional metrics, media formats, and donor expectations. This aligns with Foucault's notion of regimes of truth, where knowledge operates not as neutral reflection but as a technology of governance. See: Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

⁵⁷ Lauren Berlant's concept of cruel optimism refers to a condition in which a subject becomes attached to a hope or aspiration that, paradoxically, obstructs their own freedom or well-being. In the context of *zakāt* distribution or empowerment narratives, the promise of self-sufficiency often appears seductive, yet structurally unrealistic – offering an illusion of upward mobility to vulnerable groups who, in reality, lack the systemic means to succeed. This optimism becomes “cruel” precisely because it masks persistent inequality behind a language of personal aspiration and moral success. See: Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), doi:10.1215/9780822394716.

⁵⁸ The argument that *zakāt* distribution has shifted from resource allocation to the redistribution of recognition echoes Axel Honneth's claim that justice is not reducible to material equality, but must also involve the affirmation of social existence and dignity. In his exchange with Nancy Fraser, Honneth defends the idea that injustice often takes the form of symbolic invisibility or misrecognition, where certain individuals or groups are denied full participation in the moral fabric of society. Within this framework, *mustahik* who fail to fit into institutionalized narratives of success are excluded not because of a lack of need, but due to a lack of narratability – they cannot be easily rendered visible or inspiring. This exclusion reflects a deeper form of epistemic marginalization, where moral worth is tethered to communicative legibility. See: Axel Honneth, *Recognition or Redistribution? A Philosophical Exchange with Nancy Fraser* (London: Verso Books, 2003).

⁵⁹ In Talal Asad's formulation, religion in the modern secular state is not eliminated but rather discursively reconfigured to align with the administrative and legal rationalities of modern governance. In *Formations of the*

categories, and manufactures measurable virtue. Empowerment, in this setting, no longer means liberation from inequality but the ability to perform success within the accepted narrative. Those who can speak the institutional language are acknowledged, while those who cannot are forgotten. As Pierre Bourdieu observes, symbolic violence operates not through coercion but through the power to define what is legitimate.⁶⁰ The contemporary narrative of zakāt, filled with images of progress, should therefore be read not as evidence of justice achieved but as a reflection of how justice has been redefined as visibility, credibility, and performance.

Between Distribution and Display: The Epistemic Limits of Islamic Justice

At the heart of zakāt lies the promise of justice – a spiritual and social commitment that transcends ritual, aiming toward real solidarity with those on the margins. Yet when zakāt is institutionalized in modern, bureaucratic, and performative forms, that promise encounters what might be called the epistemic limit of Islamic justice – where values of virtue are constrained by the logic of systems, display, and the demands of visual legitimacy. Zakāt, which ought to function as a medium of social reconstruction, now increasingly submits to the aesthetics of dashboards, moral branding, and administrative justification.⁶¹ Structurally, zakāt today is caught in a tension between the logic of performance and the ethics of distribution. The more zakāt is framed through narratives of success, infographics, and testimonial videos, the greater the risk of deviation from its ethical roots. The 2023 Annual Report of BAZNAS RI, for instance, highlights that over 60% of *mustahik* recipients of productive zakāt succeeded in increasing their income. Yet the report does not mention how many failed, fell back into poverty, or exited the system for not meeting the criteria of “success.” A more honest dataset would reveal that as of March 2024, the number of people living in extreme

Secular, Asad argues that religious practices such as *zakāt* are not simply preserved as private acts of piety, but become intelligible and legitimate only when they conform to state-defined norms, institutional procedures, and public expectations. While Asad does not explicitly use the term biopolitics, his analysis invites a Foucauldian reading: *zakāt*, in its contemporary institutionalized form, functions not only as a moral obligation but also as a technology of population management, tied to quantifiable metrics, empowerment indicators, and public displays of social order. In this sense, zakāt operates within a regime where spiritual discourse is entangled with bureaucratic performativity, statistical governance, and visualized legitimacy. See: Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*.

⁶⁰ Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence refers to a form of domination enacted not through coercion but through control over meaning, language, and social legitimacy. In the context of *zakāt* distribution, recipients (*mustahik*) who can articulate their stories in dominant narrative forms – those of success, transformation, or self-reliance – are often deemed “worthy” and “empowered.” Meanwhile, those who remain silent, or whose experiences do not conform to institutional ideals, are rendered invisible or burdensome to the narrative structure. This is symbolic violence: institutions do not need to censor explicitly, because the criteria of visibility and worth are already internalized and aligned with what is considered acceptable, safe, and inspiring. Power thus operates through the aesthetics of moral legitimacy, shaping who can be seen and who must remain hidden. See: Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B Thompson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

⁶¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

poverty nationwide remains around 5.45 million⁶² - most of whom are untouched by zakāt programs because they are not deemed “ready to be empowered.”

A central question, framed in Rawlsian terms, whether today’s zakāt system truly prioritizes the least advantaged – or simply serves those who are easiest to assist and most brandable as success stories.⁶³ If social justice is measured through visual indices and performative metrics, the distributive system loses its corrective function and shifts into a regime of moral curation. Timur Kuran identifies this phenomenon as the transformation of zakāt into a symbolic economy of piety, where religious performance no longer demands ethical substance, but merely the exhibition of “verifiable piety.”⁶⁴ This research finds that behind elegant dashboards and viral inspirational videos, zakāt risks producing an illusion of justice: a system that appears inclusive but is in practice highly selective. Those who do not fit the empowerment criteria – such as persons with severe disabilities, impoverished elderly without family, or *mustahik* with mental health issues – are often excluded from the productive zakāt framework. There is no space for them within a zakāt logic that recognizes only “success” and “self-reliance.” Yet in the authentic ethics of zakāt, as emphasized in Q.S. At-Taubah verse 60, zakāt is not limited to the poor and needy – it is also for the *riqāb* (those in bondage) and the *gharimīn* (those overwhelmed by debt) – categories that are often overlooked simply because they cannot be framed as inspirational stories.

Thus, this critique is not a rejection of zakāt, but a call to reclaim its radical ethics – the imperative to stand consistently with the excluded, not merely with those who can be “empowered.” What is needed is a distributive approach that does not submit to administrative legibility alone, but dares to venture into spaces that are not photogenic, not viral, and not comfortable. This means going beyond metrics of success, toward recognition of poverty in its unquantifiable forms: alienation, the loss of dignity, and erasure from the public sphere. To enact justice in the name of Islam today requires more than systems, reports, and visual campaigns. It demands the courage to confront social disorder that cannot be rendered into dashboard formats. It requires a theology of discomfort – a theology of discomfort – which recognizes that Islamic justice does not begin with numbers, but with honest encounters with those who will never appear in success statistics. And it is precisely there that justice finds its most authentic form.

What is most dangerous about the logic of display in today’s zakāt is not only about who is spotlighted, but about who remains perpetually unheard. When success becomes the prerequisite

⁶² Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), *Profil Kemiskinan Di Indonesia Maret 2024* (Jakarta, 2024).

⁶³ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*.

⁶⁴ Kuran, *Islam and Mammon: The Economic Predicaments of Islamism*, 2004.

for visibility, failure is not merely hidden – it is excluded from the system altogether.⁶⁵ Yet in classical Islamic theology, the existence of the oppressed (*al-mustad'afin*) is not merely the object of policy, but the moral index of a society. As Ali Shariati once said, the measure of a community's civility lies in how deeply it cares for “those who have no one.”⁶⁶ When zakāt only reaches those who can return the gesture in the form of a visual story, we abandon the majority of the ummah who do not conform to the algorithm of “performance.” This is the epistemic limit of Islamic justice today: when distributive systems are constrained by recyclable success narratives, while poverty continues in mute and unrecognized forms. In such conditions, zakāt requires not only technical evaluation, but epistemological reflection: how do we know poverty? Who do we recognize as *mustabik*? And what do we count as “success”?⁶⁷ For when zakāt operates only within the confines of numbers, videos, and reports, it moves away from the human face – and toward a technocratic calculation sterilized of tears and wounds.

CONCLUSION

Today, zakāt has shifted from a mechanism of distributive justice to a stage of visual performance and moral legitimacy. Behind elegant reports and inspiring campaigns lies the systematic exclusion of *mustabik* who fail to meet administrative standards, cannot be displayed, or do not fit entrepreneurial narratives. From Rawls's perspective, such a system fails the least advantaged; in Kuran's view, it reflects a sanitized Islamic identity detached from structural resistance. This study does not reject zakāt but challenges the epistemology of distribution that equates justice with visibility. What is needed is a “theology of discomfort”—one that dares to engage with those absent from dashboards and erased from reports. Such a theology demands both conceptual reorientation and practical reconstruction. Zakāt institutions must move beyond managerial comfort toward genuine inclusion of the unseen—the undocumented, the unskilled, and the unsupported. Performance indicators should prioritize inclusion rather than spectacle; reports should acknowledge not only success but also limitation and failure. Amil should be trained to recognize unquantifiable vulnerabilities such as social exclusion and trauma. Institutionalizing such discomfort restores zakāt's theological vocation as an ethic of encounter with the least visible members of society. This study remains limited by its dependence on legal documents, institutional reports, and few interviews. Future research should extend to multisite fieldwork and quantitative

⁶⁵ Honneth, *Recognition or Redistribution? A Philosophical Exchange with Nancy Fraser*.

⁶⁶ Ali Shariati, *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies: An Islamic Critique*, ed. R Campbell, First (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1980).

⁶⁷ Jodi Dean, *Publicity's Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

surveys to identify those excluded by administrative logics, compare bureaucratic and community-based governance, and assess the long-term effects of productive zakāt on social mobility.

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