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### **PARADIGM AND STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING ZAKAT COLLECTION THROUGH COLLABORATION**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The focus of this qualitative research in the form of a case study is to describe the paradigm and strategies for improving zakat collection through strengthening collaboration between the Zakat Collection Unit and the Regional Government in North Padang Lawas Regency. Data were obtained from lecture materials, discussions, interviews, observations, and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) involving BAZNAS, Mosque Councils, BKMT, village officials, business actors, and government institutions. The results of the study show a significant increase in public zakat literacy, identification of zakat potential in the agricultural, trade, and professional sectors, as well as increased public awareness to channel zakat through official institutions. This research provides strategic contributions to the improvement of zakat governance while highlighting the role of students as agents of change. It is hoped that this program can become a model that can be replicated for sustainable community empowerment based on zakat in other regions.

**Keywords:** *Paradigm, Strategy, Collaboration, Zakat Collection Unit*



## A. Introduction

Zakat management in Indonesia plays a strategic role in the economic and social welfare system, particularly in areas with relatively high poverty rates. Zakat is not merely viewed as an obligatory act of worship, but rather as an economic instrument capable of creating a fair redistribution of wealth, strengthening social inclusion, and supporting community development based on Islamic values (Sultan, 2023). North Padang Lawas Regency, as a predominantly Muslim region, has significant zakat potential, spanning agriculture, trade, livestock, and the professional sectors. However, this potential has not been fully realized due to various structural, administrative, and social constraints (Savrina et al., 2024).

The transformation of zakat management requires innovation and strengthening of governance to be relevant to the demands of the times. Social change, developments in information technology, and the increasing complexity of community needs require zakat institutions such as BAZNAS to update their systems, strategies, and operational management (Mashur et al, 2022). In the context of North Padang Lawas, the main challenges faced by BAZNAS include limited muzakki databases, minimal zakat literacy, weak inter-institutional coordination, and the suboptimal performance of UPZ as the spearhead of zakat collection. Without strategic updates and strong institutional cooperation, zakat potential will remain a mere statistic that does not contribute significantly to poverty reduction.

One of the most fundamental problems in zakat management is the lack of comprehensive data on the district's overall zakat potential. Many economic sectors have not been accurately identified as sources of zakat, making it difficult for BAZNAS to determine policy priorities and effective collection strategies (Siregar et al., 2021). Data collection based on scientific methodologies such as economic potential mapping, household surveys, and demographic analysis is needed to more accurately capture the potential of muzakki and mustahik.

This data will serve as the basis for BAZNAS' strategic planning in developing a more responsive and targeted zakat collection and distribution program (Ahsan et al, 2009). In addition to data issues, institutional synergy between the Zakat Collection Unit (UPZ), BAZNAS Regency, and the Regional Government still needs to be strengthened. UPZs, spread across government agencies, mosques, and a number of community organizations, play a spearheading role in exploring zakat potential at the grassroots level (Hudaifah et al, 2020). However, without systematic guidance, targets, supervision, and evaluation, UPZ performance often falls short of optimal levels. This is where BAZNAS, as the official amil institution, plays a crucial role in strengthening the coordination structure, ensuring clear operational standards, and providing training for zakat collectors. On the other hand, the Regional Government plays an important role in supporting zakat institutions, both through regulatory and administrative support and the provision of facilities.

Regional Regulations (Perda) that comprehensively regulate zakat management can provide a strong legal basis for BAZNAS to develop innovative programs and enforce a more systemic zakat collection mechanism (Intan et al, 2021). In addition, government collaboration in zakat literacy campaigns, integration of regional social data, and facilitation of mustahik empowerment are key components in realizing a healthy and productive zakat ecosystem.

In terms of modernization, the use of information technology is a fundamental necessity. Digitizing the zakat system through a zakat payment application, a muzakki dashboard, a distribution monitoring system, and an integrated database can increase transparency, efficiency, and public trust. Trust is a crucial element in zakat collection; the higher the level of public trust in BAZNAS, the greater the potential zakat collection. By utilizing digital technology, BAZNAS can improve performance visibility, accelerate administrative processes, and expand service access (Haryono & Rivai, 2025).

The role of postgraduate students in this context is highly relevant. Students serve not only as academic scientists but also as agents of social change with analytical, methodological, and innovative capacities (Ratih Prawirawati). Through community service activities, students can contribute to strengthening zakat governance by assisting in data collection on zakat potential, developing strategic analyses, providing public education, and designing institutional collaboration models. The involvement of students brings a scientific, research-based approach, enabling the development of zakat collection strategies to be not only intuitive but also empirical and evidence-based. Therefore, strengthening zakat management in North Padang Lawas Regency requires a collaborative, data-driven approach, innovative strategies, good governance, and support from all parties. Synergy between the UPZ (Zone-Owned Zakat Institution), BAZNAS (National Zakat Agency), the Regional Government, and academics is a key pillar in realizing a more effective, accountable, and sustainable zakat management system. These efforts are expected to improve community welfare and strengthen zakat's role as an instrument of Islamic economic development.

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a field study design combined with community service activities. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of strengthening zakat collection strategies through institutional synergy between UPZ, BAZNAS, and the Regional Government in North Padang Lawas Regency. The research was conducted from October to December 2025 at several relevant locations, including the BAZNAS Office of North Padang Lawas Regency, the Gunung Tua Grand Mosque, Sialang Village, Aek Hauraya Village, Simangambat District, and the Paluta District Attorney's Office. Research informants were determined through a purposive sampling technique, including BAZNAS commissioners, village UPZ administrators and agencies,

religious leaders, village officials, BKMT administrators, the Mosque Council, plantation business actors, and community members who attended the socialization.

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through direct observation of zakat institutional activities, semi-structured interviews with key informants, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to explore perceptions and recommendations, and documentation of activities in the form of field notes and visual evidence. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained through zakat policy documents, BAZNAS internal reports, academic literature, and regional socio-economic data. Data analysis techniques used the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation in a structured narrative form, and systematic conclusion drawing. Data validity was maintained through the application of source triangulation, technical triangulation, and time triangulation to ensure the objectivity and consistency of research findings. The entire research process was carried out through pre-field stages, field data collection, and preparation of analytical reports in accordance with academic standards.

Studies on zakat management have been widely conducted with various approaches and focuses. Most previous research tends to emphasize aspects such as institutional efficiency, muzaki compliance behavior, and the impact of zakat on poverty alleviation. For instance, Wahab and Rahman (2011) focused on measuring the efficiency of zakat institutions using a quantitative approach. Meanwhile, Saad and Haniffa (2014) examined the factors influencing muzaki compliance in paying zakat, and Beik (2015) analyzed the role of zakat in reducing poverty. In addition, more recent studies have explored the digitalization of zakat management as a means to improve transparency and efficiency.

In contrast to those studies, this research adopts a field-based approach through Field Study and Community Service (PkM), which is not only analytical but also intervention-oriented. This study emphasizes strategies to enhance zakat collection by strengthening the synergy between UPZ, BAZNAS, and local government at the regional level. Furthermore, it produces practical outcomes, including increased public zakat literacy, mapping of local zakat potential, and the establishment of new UPZ units. Therefore, this study offers more contextual and practical contributions, particularly in strengthening zakat governance in rural areas such as North Padang Lawas Regency.

## **B. Theoretical Discouse on Effective Zakat Collection Strategies**

Effective zakat strategies are a crucial component in optimizing zakat management as a socio-economic instrument in Islam. Zakat is not only a religious obligation but also a mechanism for wealth distribution that contributes to reducing social inequality. Therefore, effective zakat management must be grounded in the

principles of good governance, including transparency, accountability, and professionalism (Ascarya et al., 2022). Recent studies indicate that strong governance in zakat institutions significantly enhances public trust and improves zakat collection performance (Rahman et al., 2021).

In the context of zakat collection, the effectiveness of strategies is strongly influenced by the level of zakat literacy and public trust in zakat institutions. Huda et al. (2020) found that zakat literacy and psychological factors significantly affect muzaki's intention to pay zakat through formal institutions. Similarly, Kasri and Putri (2021) emphasize that trust and service accessibility are key determinants of zakat compliance. Therefore, structured education and awareness programs are essential strategies to increase community participation.

Institutional strengthening is another key element of effective zakat strategies. Hassan and Noor (2022) highlight that organizational capacity, human resource quality, and inter-institutional collaboration play a significant role in improving zakat management effectiveness. In this regard, synergy between BAZNAS, Zakat Collection Units (UPZ), and local governments is a strategic approach to expanding zakat collection coverage.

In the digital era, the utilization of technology has become increasingly important. Firmansyah et al. (2023) demonstrate that the digitalization of zakat management enhances efficiency, transparency, and service accessibility. However, in rural contexts, community-based approaches remain highly relevant in building trust and encouraging participation.

### **C. Paradigms and Zakat Management in North Padang Lawas Regency**

The results of the Field Study and Community Service (PkM) activities carried out in North Padang Lawas Regency revealed several important findings that reflect the actual conditions of zakat management at the regional level and the socio-religious dynamics of the local community. In general, this activity provided a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of zakat socialization, the institutional capacity of the Zakat Collection Unit (UPZ), and public awareness in fulfilling zakat obligations through official institutions. The findings obtained are substantive and have direct relevance to the need to improve zakat governance in North Padang Lawas Regency.

First, zakat outreach activities conducted through lectures, dialogues, and field mentoring have significantly improved community zakat literacy. In various meetings with the BKMT (Central Islamic Board of Trustees), Mosque Councils, and mosque congregations, it was apparent that the community is beginning to understand more deeply the types of zakat, the nisab (minimum threshold), and the advantages of distributing zakat through official institutions such as BAZNAS. This was reflected in the high level of community enthusiasm during discussion sessions,

which were characterized by numerous technical questions regarding agricultural zakat, professional zakat, and trade zakat. These findings indicate that an interactive, educational approach is highly effective in building collective awareness. Therefore, regular outreach activities are an important strategy that BAZNAS and UPZ need to maintain and strengthen in the future.

Second, this field study also successfully mapped the significant zakat potential across various local economic sectors. Observations indicate that North Padang Lawas Regency has zakat potential from the agricultural sector (particularly palm oil), traditional market trade, village officials, and several micro-enterprises. Many business owners and farmers have actually reached the nisab threshold but have not yet been adequately covered by zakat education programs. The limited data collection on mustahik and muzakki has resulted in this zakat potential being underutilized. This finding is crucial because it provides direction for BAZNAS (National Agency for Zakat Management) in developing zakat collection strategies based on the village's real potential. Therefore, this zakat potential mapping represents a significant contribution of the Field Study, providing baseline data for evidence-based zakat policy planning.

Third, coordination activities involving various stakeholders such as BAZNAS Commissioners, Mosque Councils, BKMTs, Village Heads, and local entrepreneurs demonstrated that institutional synergy is key to the effectiveness of regional zakat management. Field findings demonstrated that village government support provided strong legitimacy in the establishment of UPZs and facilitated the process of collecting mustahik data. Similarly, the extensive network of BKMTs and mosques proved highly effective in disseminating zakat information quickly and effectively. This intensive coordination fostered a collective awareness that zakat management requires collaboration between religious institutions, village governments, and zakat institutions. Therefore, the success of the Field Study activities in establishing two-way communication between these institutions is a significant contribution to strengthening the zakat ecosystem in North Padang Lawas.

Fourth, the field study results indicate that UPZ administrators still need to significantly improve their human resource capacity, particularly in technical aspects such as financial recording, zakat administration, reporting, and public transparency. Many UPZ administrators work voluntarily, thus varying in their competencies and requiring ongoing mentoring. Through simple educational and training activities, students can make a tangible contribution by improving UPZ administrators' understanding of professional and accountable zakat governance. These findings reinforce the important role of academics and students as agents of change, bridging theoretical knowledge with practical implementation in the field.

Fifth, the FGD and public discussions generated various constructive input from the community. Among the most prominent inputs was the need for digitalization of zakat services, particularly the use of QRIS, a simple digital

reporting system, and social media as a means of zakat outreach. The community also desired increased transparency of zakat institutions in the form of regular, publicly accessible reports. Furthermore, the community hoped that zakat funds would not only be distributed for consumption but also be allocated to economic empowerment programs for those entitled to receive zakat. These inputs are crucial because they demonstrate that the community has now transformed into active partners in developing regional zakat governance.

Sixth, the field study activities succeeded in building a strategic partnership network that serves as an important foundation for the sustainability of regional zakat management. The relationships established between students, BAZNAS, UPZ, the Mosque Council, BKMT, village governments, and other institutions such as the District Attorney's Office demonstrate that the multi-stakeholder collaboration model is highly relevant in the context of modern zakat management. This partnership allows for a clear division of roles: BAZNAS as the central institution, UPZ as the field executor, village governments as administrative facilitators, BKMT as religious instructors, and students as educational facilitators. This collaboration not only impacts the success of current activities but also opens up opportunities for long-term mentoring through the "Menaan Zakat Village" program.

Overall, the results and discussions indicate that the Field Study and Community Service activities not only provide academic impact but also make a tangible contribution to strengthening regional zakat governance. Field findings demonstrate that the zakat potential in North Padang Lawas Regency is substantial, but requires institutional strengthening, increased literacy, and ongoing synergy. The success of these activities confirms that integrating educational, collaborative, and data-driven approaches is the most appropriate strategy for building professional, transparent, and empowering zakat governance.

#### **D. Development of Collaborative and Educational Zakat Management**

The results of field studies indicate that efforts to increase public understanding of zakat through outreach and counseling have had a significant impact, but still leave a number of challenges that require further analysis. Various outreach activities with the BKMT, Mosque Council, village officials, and the general public revealed that the majority of the community has a strong interest in learning more about zakat regulations, particularly regarding trade zakat, agricultural zakat, and the mechanism for distributing zakat through official institutions such as BAZNAS. However, activities in several villages indicate that the level of public understanding varies; areas with frequent religious study groups or active religious organizations demonstrate a better understanding than villages with less outreach activities. These findings emphasize that the success of outreach activities is highly

dependent on social character, the intensity of da'wah, and the activeness of religious institutions in the area.

Furthermore, various activities conducted in collaboration with BAZNAS (National Zakat Agency) demonstrate that the zakat potential in North Padang Lawas Regency is actually very large, particularly in the agricultural sector, traditional trade, and village apparatus professions. However, this potential has not been fully utilized optimally due to the lack of a structured data collection system for muzakki and mustahik. Coordination between students and village heads in various regions confirmed that several villages do not yet have active Zakat Collection Units (UPZ), so zakat transactions are still conducted individually without reporting to official institutions. This condition has resulted in minimal institutional zakat receipts and hampers the program for more equitable zakat distribution. Therefore, strengthening the UPZ institution is one of the main focuses that must be improved based on the results of the activity evaluation.

The mentoring provided by students to UPZ administrators also revealed an urgent need for administrative skills, zakat recording, reporting, and transparency. At several UPZs visited, administrators acknowledged that administrative record-keeping was still manual and very rudimentary. This aligns with the finding that most administrators work voluntarily, resulting in a lack of uniform technical competency. Nevertheless, the mentoring activities conducted during the field study yielded positive results, evident in the UPZ administrators' increased understanding of their role as an extension of BAZNAS in the village. The student mentoring successfully provided basic technical guidance and motivation to ensure the UPZs carried out their duties in accordance with sharia provisions and BAZNAS regulations.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted with the community, religious leaders, and government officials revealed a strong desire to improve the transparency and utilization of zakat. The community desired transparent reporting on zakat collection and distribution and hoped that the funds would be directed toward economic empowerment programs, not just consumer assistance. These aspirations demonstrate a high level of public concern, but require concrete evidence to further strengthen their trust in zakat institutions. This is crucial, as trust is a key factor in the success of institutional zakat collection.

Furthermore, coordination activities carried out with the BAZNAS of North Padang Lawas Regency, the District Attorney's Office, and the village government provided an understanding that synergy between institutions is a crucial factor in determining the success of zakat governance. The collaboration established during the field study confirmed that the zakat program will run more effectively if it involves all elements, including BAZNAS, UPZ, religious leaders, village officials, and the community. The activity also demonstrated that the presence of students serves as a link between the theory learned in higher education and the practice of public

service at the local level. This synergy is one of the important findings of the activity, as it opens up opportunities for the establishment of Assisted Zakat Villages that can become models for integrated zakat management in the future.

Overall, the results and discussions of this second phase demonstrate that the field study activities not only provided an educational impact on the community but also provided a comprehensive picture of the reality of zakat management in North Padang Lawas. The challenges identified, such as low literacy in some areas, weak UPZ recording, suboptimal zakat data collection, and weak public trust, can serve as a basis for BAZNAS to formulate strategies for strengthening zakat institutions in the future. Based on these field findings, it can be concluded that the development of zakat management must be carried out sustainably through an educational approach, increasing UPZ capacity, data-based zakat potential mapping, and more intensive multi-stakeholder collaboration.

## **E. Conclusion**

Field study activities in North Padang Lawas Regency demonstrated that zakat socialization and outreach efforts have significantly increased public understanding and enthusiasm for paying zakat through BAZNAS, although literacy levels still vary across regions. The mapping of zakat potential revealed that the region possesses substantial resources, which remain underutilized due to inadequate data on muzakki and mustahik, as well as administrative limitations within several UPZs. Furthermore, student mentoring contributed to improving the basic administrative skills of UPZ personnel, particularly in recording and reporting zakat. Findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) also highlighted the community's expectation for greater transparency and more productive zakat programs. Overall, the study confirms that institutional synergy among BAZNAS, village governments, religious leaders, and other stakeholders plays a crucial role in strengthening zakat management.

These findings imply that effective zakat governance requires an integrated approach combining literacy enhancement, institutional capacity building, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The study contributes theoretically by reinforcing the importance of collaborative and community-based approaches in zakat management. However, this research is limited to a specific regional context and does not fully incorporate digital-based zakat management systems. Therefore, future research is recommended to explore broader regional comparisons and the integration of digital technologies in zakat administration. Practically, it is recommended that BAZNAS and related institutions improve data management systems, strengthen UPZ capacity through continuous training, and enhance transparency to build greater public trust.

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