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STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF ZAKAT FITRAH DISTRIBUTION AMONG *IKMALJA* KUDUS MEMBERS AS MUSTAHIQ

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Abstract

Not all students have the same understanding of the meaning of the eight asnaf who are entitled to receive zakat in the Quran, Surah At Taubah, verse 60. For students who are members of the Kudus Out-of-Java Students Association (IKMALJA), they are not priority recipients of zakat, especially zakat fitrah. This study aims to determine and discuss the perceptions of students of the Kudus Out-of-Java Students Association (IKMALJA) regarding the provision of zakat fitrah for students as mustahiq. The research approach used is qualitative with descriptive-sociological nature. This type of research is field research. Data were collected through unstructured interviews, documents, and literature. The sampling method used purposive sampling, the research location was in Kudus district, the data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification. This study shows that the majority of IKMALJA students do not fully understand the concept of mustahiq (zakat fitrah recipients). They tend to interpret zakat fitrah only for the poor and needy, thus ignoring their right to receive zakat. This perception arises from the process of social cognition, in which individuals interpret religious values based on their social and cultural

norms. This indicates low zakat literacy and misunderstandings about the status of zakat recipients. These findings theoretically demonstrate that zakat is not merely an economic tool, but also a moral and social space that instills Islamic values, justice, dignity, and solidarity.

Keywords: *Student Perception, Mustabiq, Zakat Fitrah, IKMALJA Kudus.*

Abstrak

Tidak semua mahasiswa memiliki pemahaman yang sama tentang makna delapan asnaf yang berhak menerima zakat dalam Al-Quran Surat at-Taubah ayat 60. Bagi mahasiswa yang tergabung dalam Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus, mereka bukanlah penerima zakat prioritas, khususnya zakat fitrah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dan membahas persepsi mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus mengenai pemberian zakat fitrah bagi mahasiswa sebagai mustahiq. Pendekatan penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan sifat deskriptif-sosiologis. Jenis penelitian ini adalah penelitian lapangan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara tidak terstruktur, dokumen, dan literatur. Metode pengambilan sampel menggunakan *purposive sampling*, lokasi penelitian di Kabupaten Kudus, data dianalisis menggunakan analisis interaktif Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan/verifikasi. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa mayoritas mahasiswa IKMALJA belum sepenuhnya memahami konsep *mustabiq* (penerima zakat fitrah). Mereka cenderung memaknai zakat fitrah hanya untuk fakir dan miskin, sehingga mengabaikan hak mereka untuk menerima zakat. Persepsi ini muncul dari proses kognisi sosial, di mana individu memaknai nilai-nilai agama berdasarkan norma sosial dan budaya mereka. Hal ini menunjukkan rendahnya literasi zakat dan kesalahpahaman tentang status penerima zakat. Temuan-temuan ini secara teoretis menunjukkan bahwa zakat bukan sekadar alat ekonomi, tetapi juga ruang moral dan sosial yang menanamkan nilai-nilai Islam, keadilan, martabat, dan solidaritas.

Kata Kunci: *Persepsi Mahasiswa, Mustabiq, Zakat Fitrah, IKMALJA Kudus.*

A. Introduction

Zakat, including zakat fitrah, is a fundamental Islamic obligation that serves as both spiritual purification and a tool for social welfare. Zakat fitrah, paid during Ramadan, aims to cleanse the giver of minor sins and support the “*mustabiq*”—those entitled to receive zakat. While zakat has significant socio-economic potential, its effectiveness depends on proper understanding, management, and distribution.

In Indonesia, zakat management is regulated by Law No. 38/1999 and its amendment, Law No. 23/2011, which encourages professional and systematic management.¹ Studies show that well-managed zakat programs can empower zakat recipients economically and socially.² However, challenges such as ineffective distribution, lack of transparency, and limited public trust often hinder the impact of zakat.^{3,4} Furthermore, many eligible recipients, including students from marginalized areas, do not receive zakat support.⁵

Students from the Kudus Out-of-Java Student Association (IKMALJA) are an example of a group often overlooked in zakat distribution. Despite their potential to be “*mustabiq*” (recipients) based on QS. At-Taubah [9]: 60, many IKMALJA students perceive zakat fitrah as solely for the poor, reflecting low zakat literacy and awareness among higher education students.

¹ Kahar Muzakir, “Prospek Zakat Dalam Perekonomian Modern,” *Journal of Legal and Cultural Analytics*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.55927/jlca.v1i1.879>.

² Imron Mawardi et al., “Analyzing the Impact of Productive Zakat on the Welfare of Zakat Recipients,” *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIABR-05-2021-0145>.

³ Khairil Faizal Khairi et al., “The Development And Application Of The Zakat Collection Blockchain System,” *Journal of Governance and Regulation*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.22495/jgrv12i1siart9>.

⁴ Musa Yusuf Owoyemi, “Zakat Management: The Crisis of Confidence in Zakat Agencies and the Legality of Giving Zakat Directly to the Poor,” *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIABR-07-2017-0097>.

⁵ Nur Rizqi Febriandika, Dilla Gading Kusuma, and Yayuli, “Zakat Compliance Behavior in Formal Zakat Institutions: An Integration Model of Religiosity, Trust, Credibility, and Accountability,” *International Journal of Advanced and Applied Sciences*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.21833/ijaas.2023.06.022>.

This study explores “IKMALJA students’ perceptions of zakat fitrah and their recognition as *mustahiq*” to address a clear research gap on zakat awareness among out-of-Java students. The findings aim to inform “educational interventions and institutional policies” to improve inclusive and effective zakat distribution and ensure the realization of spiritual and socioeconomic goals.

This research is a field research. The research approach used is a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach allows researchers to obtain accurate data based on facts and realities at the research location.⁶ The nature of this research is descriptive-sociological. The data obtained is described based on the existing social setting conditions. Thus, the data will be able to describe the actual reality conditions.⁷ The data in this study were obtained from unstructured interviews, documents, and literature.⁸ The researcher did not create an interview guideline as a guideline for questions and answers to informants. However, the researcher still refers to the main theme of the research, namely the perception of students of the Outer Java Student Association (IKMALJA) Kudus regarding the provision of zakat fitrah for students as *mustahiq*. While informants were obtained using a purposive random sampling technique. This means that only informants who know about the research data were interviewed.⁹ The informants are divided into three, namely key informants, main informants, and additional informants. The key informants are the supervisors of IKMALJA Kudus, while the main informants are students who are members of IKMALJA Kudus. This is then supplemented with additional informants, namely people related to the research theme.

⁶ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2018).

⁷ W. Lawrence Neuman, *No Title Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (United States of America: Pearson Education Limited, 2014).

⁸ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice (4th Ed.)* (New Delhi: Sage publications, 2015).

⁹ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook (4th Ed.)* (United States of America: Sage Publications, 2014).

The data obtained is then analyzed and tested for validity. Data analysis is carried out in several stages, namely data collection, data reduction, data analysis, and data presentation.¹⁰ After being analyzed, the data is then checked for validity using triangulation techniques. The triangulation used is source triangulation, namely matching the interview results with existing documents and literature.¹¹

B. Discussion

1. The Concept of Zakat and Perception Theory

Zakat, including zakat fitrah, is one of the pillars of Islam. It occupies the fourth position after fasting. Zakat plays a crucial role in the social life of Muslim communities. It purifies a Muslim's wealth, strengthens brotherhood, helps those in need, and, in the context of Islamic politics, serves as a source of funding for a state.¹² Zakat distribution can be implemented in two ways: directly to the *mustahiq* (receiver) or through zakat institutions. Zakat institutions can distribute zakat by upholding the principles of obedience, credibility, and religiosity, which influence compliance with zakat payments.¹³ The *mustahiq* (receiver) holds a unique position. They are not only beneficiaries but also subjects who support the social objectives of zakat.¹⁴ *Mustahiq* can utilize zakat as a productive measure to improve their welfare through empowerment. This is done by utilizing zakat as

¹⁰ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods, 6th Edition* (London: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2018).

¹¹ Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods* (New York: Transaction publishers, 2017).

¹² Owoyemi, "Zakat Management: The Crisis of Confidence in Zakat Agencies and the Legality of Giving Zakat Directly to the Poor."

¹³ Febriandika, Kusuma, and Yayuli, "Zakat Compliance Behavior in Formal Zakat Institutions: An Integration Model of Religiosity, Trust, Credibility, and Accountability."

¹⁴ Thoaha Yasin Utsman, Syamsul Ma'arif, and Silda Labibi, "Pengaruh Pendayagunaan Zakat Produktif Terhadap Pemberdayaan Mustahiq," *Tasharruf: Journal of Islamic Economics and Business*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.55757/tasharruf.v3i2.185>.

business capital or savings that can be used for business development.¹⁵

The implications of zakat are complex. It encompasses not only material well-being, spiritual well-being, education, and health, but also household independence.¹⁶ Therefore, the scope of zakat recipients is very broad, as mentioned in Surah At-Taubah [9], verse 60 of the Quran. There are eight categories of zakat recipients: the poor, the needy, the amil (manager of charity), the converts to Islam, the slaves, the debtors, those in the service of Allah, and those who are struggling (Rosli et al., 2018). Zakat is not just a religious practice, but is a strategic economic instrument in Islamic macroeconomics.¹⁷ Social perception theory studies how individuals acquire, interpret, remember, and use information about people and social situations.¹⁸ Social perception theory can be used to understand how students interpret “*mustahiq*,” stigma, and feelings related to receiving zakat. According to Heider, individuals interpret social meaning based on their experiences, values, and interactions with their environment.¹⁹ This means that a person’s social perception of zakat will vary depending on their experiences, values, and environment.

¹⁵ Syah Amelia Manggala Putri, Eka Jati Rahayu Firmansyah, and Homaidi Hamid, “The Mustahiq Empowerment Model: A Collaboration between Sharia Bank and OPZ in Optimizing Zakat Funds,” *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2019.7232>.

¹⁶ Leny Agustin, “Dampak Zakat Terhadap Kesejahteraan Mustahiq Berdasarkan Indeks Kesejahteraan BAZNAS (Studi Pada Mustahiq Penerima Bantuan Zakat Dalam Program Karanganyar Makmur Di BAZNAS Kabupaten Karanganyar),” *Filantropi: Jurnal Manajemen Zakat Dan Wakaf*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.22515/finalmazawa.v1i2.2950>.

¹⁷ Siti Walida Mustamin et al., “The Role of Zakat in Islamic Macroeconomics: A Fiscal Instrument for Stability during Global Economic Crises,” *Journal of Islamic Economics Lariba* 11 No. 1 (2025), https://journal.uii.ac.id/JIELariba/article/view/39858?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

¹⁸ Maisarah Pendri and S Neviyarni, “Persepsi Sosial Dan Kognisi Sosial: Pemahaman, Pengaruh Dan Implikasinya Dalam Intreaksi Sosial,” *Journal on Teacher Education* 6 (2024): 2013–16.

¹⁹ Bertram F Malle, “Fritz Heider ’ s Legacy Celebrated Insights , Many of Them Misunderstood,” *Social Psychology* 39, no. October (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335.39.3.163>.

The classic definition, as proposed by Gordon Allport (1954), states that social perception emphasizes attitudes, prejudices, and socialization.²⁰ Meanwhile, social perception now emphasizes not only the role of attitudes, prejudices, and socialization but also the process of understanding others and influencing social interactions.²¹ In the context of zakat, both the giver and the recipient engage in social interactions that ultimately strengthen social cohesion or solidarity. According to Emile Durkheim, social solidarity is divided into two types: mechanical social solidarity, which means that moral and social similarities underlie bonds within a society because they engage in the same activities and responsibilities; and organic social solidarity, where relationships within a society persist because of differences.²² Religious practices such as zakat serve to strengthen relationships between communities due to moral and social similarities, which will ultimately strengthen social integration.

A specific phenomenon in society that sometimes goes unnoticed is the role of out-of-town students as recipients of zakat fitrah. Those who are members of IKMALJA are out-of-town students from outside Java who are studying on Java. Based on the categories of zakat recipients, they are included in the *mustabiq* group, which can be categorized as poor, the needy, those in the service of Allah, and those who are struggling.

Out-of-town students face economic constraints. With their heavy study load, they desperately need zakat (alms) to support their education and well-being. IKMALJA (Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa) Kudus, as a community of out-of-town students, serves as a platform for strengthening solidarity, a sense of togetherness, and a medium for

²⁰ Effy Wardati Maryam, *Psikologi Sosial: Penerapan Dalam Permasalahan Sosial*, ed. Septi Budi Sartika, *Psikologi Sosial Penerapan Dalam Permasalahan Sosial* (Sidoarjo: Umsida Press, 2019).

²¹ Pendri and Neviyarni, "Persepsi Sosial Dan Kognisi Sosial: Pemahaman, Pengaruh Dan Implikasinya Dalam Intreaksi Sosial."

²² Witri Safitri, "Penerapan Prinsip Solidaritas Sosial Menurut Emile Durkheim Dalam Kasus Haris Azhar Dan Fathia," *Nusantara: Jurnal Pendidikan, Seni, Sains Dan Sosial Humanioral*, 2023.

informal learning for its members.²³ Although they lack a permanent secretariat, they utilize social media as a means of communication and coordination for their members' activities.²⁴ Facts show that not all out-of-town students understand their rights as zakat recipients (*mustahiq*), especially zakat fitrah. They are unaware of their right to receive zakat from muzakki.²⁵ This limited understanding can result in the suboptimal use of zakat to support education and develop the potential of out-of-town students. Furthermore, this reality highlights the gap between zakat's potential as an empowerment tool and students' awareness as legitimate recipients.

2. IKMALJA's View of Zakat Fitrah

IKMALJA students don't come from just one region. They come from various parts of Indonesia. At IKMALJA Kudus, students come from areas such as Jambi, Palembang, Lampung, South Sulawesi, Bali, and Papua. They study at UIN Sunan Kudus in various study programs, including Islamic Business Management (MBS), Islamic Political Thought (PPI), Early Childhood Education (PIAUD), Islamic Family Law (HKI), Science Education, Islamic Guidance and Counseling (BKI), and Zakat and Waqf Management (MZW). These diverse student backgrounds impact their differing perceptions and understanding of zakat. As stated in the Quran, Surah At-Taubah [9], verse 103, and the hadith conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), zakat purifies wealth and the soul. Zakat has

²³ Dara Putri Ghassani, Sirril Wafa, and Herison Pandapotan Purba, "A Qualitative Study on Psychological Well-Being of Members of a University Student Organization during the Covid-19 Pandemic," *INSAN Jurnal Psikologi Dan Kesehatan Mental* 7, no. 2 (2022): 167–87, <https://doi.org/10.20473/jpkm.v7i22022.167-187>.

²⁴ Luana Sasabone et al., "The Role of Social Media in Increasing Social Interaction in Language Learning in Indonesian Higher Education," *International Journal of Language and Ubiquitous Learning* 1, no. 4 (2024): 220–32, <https://doi.org/10.70177/ijlul.v1i4.683>.

²⁵ Yulia Anisa and Moh Mukhsin, "The Role Of Zakat In Realizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) To Increase Community Economic Income," *Jurnal Ekonomi Islam* 13, no. 2 (2022): 2579–6453.

dimensions beyond worship, but also social ones. This view aligns with the views of the students who are members of IKMALJA.

Hamdan Adib stated that “zakat is an obligation paid once a year to purify oneself.” He added, “Zakat Fitrah is 2.5 kg of staple foods and is given before Eid al-Fitr.”²⁶ Hamdan’s explanation provides an understanding that zakat is interpreted as a form of *taḥkiyah* worship. Similarly, Silvia Destiyani emphasized that “zakat is an obligation for Muslim men and women to be paid once a year, specifically during the month of Ramadan”.²⁷ Diah Ayu Lestari provided a more in-depth opinion on zakat. She stated, “Zakat Fitrah is obligatory for Muslims who are able to pay during the month of Ramadan for self-purification and to seek blessings. Zakat consists of staple foods that are distributed to the poor before Eid al-Fitr”.²⁸

The research findings above show that the majority of IKMALJA students understand zakat fitrah, both normatively and ritually. However, they do not fully understand the distribution and social justice aspects of zakat, particularly regarding the recipients of zakat. Furthermore, this indicates that their social perception is still limited to the context of individual worship, rather than the broader social system.

Based on the theory of social perception, a person will interpret social meaning based on their experiences, values, and social relationships.²⁹ In this context, students who are members of IKMALJA interpret zakat fitrah based on the framework of their

²⁶ Hamdan Adib, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai Mustahiq” (2024).

²⁷ Silvia Destiyani, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai Mustahiq” (2024).

²⁸ Diah Ayu Lestari, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai Mustahiq” (2024).

²⁹ Malle, “Fritz Heider ’ s Legacy Celebrated Insights , Many of Them Misunderstood.”

religious experiences and culture, rather than on a deep understanding of fiqh. The majority of IKMALJA students believe that zakat serves not only moral but also social purposes. Numitasari stated that “zakat fitrah aims to purify oneself, instill Islamic values, and foster goodness and justice among Muslims”.³⁰ Yuni added that “zakat fitrah is not only an act of worship, but also a way to spread benefits in social life.”³¹

The opinions of these two students align with modern zakat theory, which emphasizes that zakat is a tool for distributing wealth and social solidarity.³² Therefore, zakat is not only understood as a spiritual obligation but also as a means of building social cohesion and equitable justice in Muslim society. Of the ten IKMALJA students interviewed, the perception was found that zakat fitrah is a form of social concern and strengthens relationships. As stated by one informant, “zakat fitrah can strengthen social ties between the rich and the poor.”³³ This finding also reinforces the theory of zakat, which posits a social mechanism that can reduce economic disparities and build empathy across social classes.

Although students held similar views, of the ten interviewed, only one had ever received zakat fitrah, Gustaf, the head of IKMALJA. The other nine students had never received zakat. Nevertheless, they argued that “students also deserve zakat, because not everyone has the financial means to pursue education.” According to Wibowo, “receiving zakat fitrah is for the sake of Allah. Zakat can help meet the

³⁰ Nurmitasari, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai Mustahiq” (2024).

³¹ Yuni, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai Mustahiq” (2024).

³² Udin Saripudin, “Filantropi Islam Dan Pemberdayaan Ekonomi,” *Bisnis* 4, no. 2 (2016), <https://journal.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/Bisnis/article/viewFile/2697/2038>.

³³ Adib, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai Mustahiq.”

necessities of life.”³⁴ The findings, based on the discussion above, demonstrate a new social perception of zakat recipients. Students assess who is worthy of zakat not only based on *fiqh* texts but also on social context, specifically considering the economic limitations of students living away from home. The reinterpretation of the *asnaf fi sabilillah* (the criteria for the right to receive zakat) appears to have provided a new meaning, so that in the social context, zakat recipients are dynamic and adapt to changing times. This is based on the interpretation of the *asnaf fi sabilillah*.

An interview with Silvia revealed a stigma surrounding zakat recipients, particularly among students. She stated, “People around me might be surprised if they found out I received zakat fitrah.”³⁵ However, the majority of students reported that societal responses can vary; some consider this normal, while others consider it taboo. The discourse on zakat recipients, from the perspective of social perception theory, illustrates a cognitive conflict between ideals and prevailing norms that consider students to be wealthy. Meanwhile, according to Robi, zakat distribution can be done discreetly; “zakat fitrah can be given discreetly.”³⁶ Siti added that “the giver of zakat should do so directly to the recipient.”³⁷ This method of zakat distribution can be interpreted as a social sensitivity to the stigma surrounding zakat recipients. Therefore, zakat distribution must pay attention to and maintain the dignity of the recipients.

³⁴ Gustaf Prastyo Wibowo, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai Mustahiq” (2024).

³⁵ Destiyan, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai Mustahiq.”

³⁶ Robi Wahyu Satria, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai Mustahiq” (2024).

³⁷ Siti Aliah, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai Mustahiq” (2024).

Ultimately, despite the social stigma and varying perceptions, IKMALJA students hope that “zakat fitrah distribution will be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the *asnaf* (Islamic order) and will pay more attention to students in need.”³⁸ Furthermore, they also proposed that IKMALJA conduct a member data collection and propose internal zakat procedures to assist fellow students who are away from home. The head of IKMALJA, Gustaf, stated that “currently, IKMALJA does not have a zakat fitrah program, but rather supports each other and mutual cooperation through sharing activities and assistance from seniors.”³⁹ The discussion above demonstrates that, in the view of IKMALJA students, zakat is more than just a ritual obligation. Zakat is a symbol of social solidarity and shared concern. This finding reinforces the theory that zakat as a social system can strengthen social networks. Furthermore, social perception theory explains the experiences and interactions of migrant students in interpreting zakat.

3. Perception of IKMALJA Kudus Students about Students as *Mustahiq* Zakat Fitrah

The findings above indicate that IKMALJA students have a positive perception of zakat distribution, particularly zakat fitrah. In general, they understand that “zakat fitrah is a right for those who *mustahiq* (payers) and an obligation for those who pay zakat.” However, some students believe that zakat fitrah should be distributed to those truly entitled to receive it, as stated by an informant, “zakat fitrah is distributed to those in need.” Based on social perception theory, this finding can be explained by the fact that individuals respond to social phenomena influenced by their experiences, values, and socioeconomic background. In the perceptions of IKMALJA

³⁸ Adib, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai *Mustahiq*.”

³⁹ Wibowo, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai *Mustahiq*.”

students, zakat fitrah is formed through social relationships and interpretations of their religious values. Students from well-off families reject accepting zakat fitrah because they feel they are not included in the *mustahiq* or *asnaf* (recipients of zakat). Meanwhile, students from less fortunate families perceive zakat fitrah as “very meaningful assistance.”

One informant stated,

*“Students who receive zakat fitrah can benefit from it. It can help them meet their needs, including supporting their studies and other daily needs.”*⁴⁰

The statement above reflects the mechanical dimension of social solidarity, namely a sense of shared destiny, togetherness, and mutual assistance within a community based on religious and moral values. Zakat fitrah is interpreted as a symbol of social ties between those who pay zakat and those who receive it. Furthermore, it serves as a means of strengthening social integration for students who are far from their families. On the other hand, some students feel uncomfortable receiving zakat fitrah because it is perceived as a reflection of inadequacy. One student stated: “I feel uncomfortable receiving zakat. Because some of my teachers have given me their opinions.”⁴¹ This phenomenon illustrates the social stigma within social perception theory. The resulting social stigma tends to be negative, positioning zakat recipients as economically inferior. This indicates that the social perception of zakat fitrah is not only theological but also socio-psychological.

The majority of students have a fairly good understanding of zakat fitrah. They interpret zakat fitrah as a purification of the soul

⁴⁰ Nurmitasari, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai Mustahiq.”

⁴¹ Wibowo, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai Mustahiq.”

and wealth, social assistance, and also strengthening Islamic brotherhood.

“Zakat fitrah has an important meaning in Islam because, in addition to being a religious obligation, it is also a means of helping others in need, strengthening bonds of brotherhood, and purifying wealth from greed and stinginess.”⁴²

This view demonstrates organic social solidarity. Differences in social and economic status are not barriers, but rather complement each other, strengthening the social cohesion of the student community. Students believe that zakat fitrah has a concrete social impact. Although this impact is small in scale, zakat fitrah can foster empathy and strengthen bonds among students. Economically, zakat fitrah can help ease the burden for students with financial limitations. This aligns with Durkheim’s theory of social solidarity, which states that collective religious practices can strengthen social integration and strengthen relationships among community members, such as the implementation of zakat.

The distribution of zakat to students remains selective. This indicates a negative perception. One student stated, “Zakat fitrah must be more effective in reaching those truly in need, and its management must be more transparent.”⁴³ This view demonstrates that economic backgrounds and values of distributive justice indicate differing social perceptions.

In an organizational context, the role of IKMALJA (Islamic Student Association) is crucial in building a shared understanding of zakat fitrah. This student community can serve as a medium of education and social solidarity for students living away from home. Several steps need to be taken, including registering members eligible to receive zakat, collaborating with zakat institutions, and educating

⁴² Lestari, “Wawancara Tentang Persepsi Mahasiswa Ikatan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa (IKMALJA) Kudus Terhadap Pemberian Zakat Fitrah Bagi Mahasiswa Sebagai Mustahiq.”

⁴³ Lestari.

students on their role as servants of God. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that IKMALJA students' social perceptions of zakat fitrah are influenced not only by religious understanding but also by their social, economic, and cultural context as students from other regions. Zakat fitrah serves not only as an obligatory act of worship but also as a mechanism of social solidarity that strengthens cohesion among members of the student community.

C. Conclusion

This research concludes that the majority of IKMALJA students have an incomplete understanding of the concept of *mustahiq* (eligible recipients) in zakat fitrah, often limiting it to the poor and needy while overlooking the broader rights of recipients. This perception is shaped by social cognition, where students interpret religious values through their social and cultural experiences, including stigma and feelings of discomfort or shame associated with receiving zakat. Social solidarity theory further highlights that zakat fitrah functions to strengthen social and moral bonds, yet ambivalent feelings among students indicate a shift toward a more individualistic and reflective understanding of solidarity. The findings demonstrate that zakat extends beyond an economic instrument to a moral and social space embodying Islamic values of justice, dignity, and collective responsibility, particularly in a contemporary context. Consequently, zakat education in higher education should emphasize both conceptual clarity regarding eligibility and the cultivation of social awareness, framing zakat as an expression of faith, empathy, and communal cohesion. Institutions such as BAZNAS, LAZMU, and LAZNU are encouraged to implement comprehensive zakat education and transparent management practices to enhance zakat's role as a tool for empowerment and solidarity among students.

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