

Sustainable Economic Development In Zakat: Islamic Perspective

Tasdik Kulumudin*, Wawan Abdul Razak²

¹ Universitas Al Ghifari

² Pondok Pesantren Darul Maghfiroh

¹ Email: tasdik.kulumudin@gmail.com

² Email: wawan.abdrzq@ptqdm.org

ABSTRACT

Background: Sustainable economic development requires an integrated approach that balances social equity, economic growth, and environmental sustainability. Zakat, as a fundamental pillar of Islam, serves as a redistributive financial mechanism that can contribute to poverty alleviation, income redistribution, and financial inclusion. However, its potential in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains underexplored in mainstream economic literature.

Methods: This study employs a qualitative research approach using content analysis of academic sources, policy documents, and institutional reports. A systematic literature review is conducted to examine zakat's role in fostering sustainable economic development, particularly in relation to poverty reduction and social welfare enhancement. Thematic analysis is applied to identify recurring patterns and assess the institutional frameworks governing zakat collection and distribution.

Results: The findings highlight that zakat, when effectively integrated into economic and social policies, serves as a powerful tool for income redistribution and financial empowerment. Productive zakat distribution towards micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) enhances financial stability. Digitalisation and regulatory reforms improve zakat governance, ensuring efficiency and transparency in its allocation.

Conclusions: Zakat has the potential to align with SDGs, particularly in poverty eradication and economic justice. A *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*-oriented framework in zakat management is essential for maximising its impact on sustainable development.

Implications: Policymakers should integrate zakat with national development strategies and explore its synergy with waqf to establish long-term funding mechanisms for socio-economic projects.

Limitations: The study focuses on zakat's economic impact, with limited discussion on socio-cultural aspects. Governance variations across jurisdictions require further comparative studies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable economic development has become a central agenda in global policymaking, particularly in the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The pursuit of economic sustainability requires a holistic approach that integrates social equity, economic growth, and environmental protection (United Nations, 2015). In this regard, Islamic finance, particularly zakat, plays a pivotal role in fostering sustainable economic development. Zakat, one of the fundamental pillars of Islam, serves as a mechanism for wealth redistribution, poverty alleviation, and social justice (Ahmed, 2021). Unlike conventional financial systems, which primarily rely on interest-based transactions, Islamic finance emphasises ethical, risk-sharing, and welfare-oriented financial principles (Chapra, 2008).

Despite the growing recognition of zakat's role in economic development, its potential as an instrument for sustainable economic progress remains underexplored in mainstream economic literature.

The contemporary global economic system often marginalises the role of religious-based financial mechanisms in fostering development (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007). Many Muslim-majority countries continue to face socio-economic disparities, despite the institutionalisation of zakat (Hassan & Noor, 2015). The effectiveness of zakat in addressing poverty, reducing inequalities, and fostering long-term economic resilience remains a subject of debate. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis is required to understand how zakat can contribute to sustainable economic development from an Islamic perspective.

This study aims to examine the theoretical foundations of zakat as a tool for sustainable economic development, analysing its impact on poverty reduction and wealth distribution while exploring its potential in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from an Islamic economic perspective. By assessing zakat's role as a financial redistribution mechanism, this research seeks to highlight its effectiveness in fostering economic equity and social welfare. Furthermore, the study investigates how zakat can be strategically integrated into contemporary economic policies to enhance financial inclusion, reduce income disparities, and contribute to sustainable growth in accordance with Islamic economic principles.

The findings of this research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing a conceptual framework for integrating zakat into sustainable economic policies. By bridging the gap between Islamic finance and sustainable development, this study will offer insights for policymakers, Islamic financial institutions, and scholars interested in ethical and inclusive economic models.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach using content analysis to examine the role of zakat in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from an Islamic perspective. The research primarily relies on a systematic literature review of academic sources, policy documents, and reports that discuss the economic implications of zakat and its alignment with sustainable economic development. Data collection involves identifying peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional publications, and religious texts that provide theoretical and empirical insights into zakat's contribution to socio-economic development (Rahmat, Ahman, & Apriliani, 2024). The selection criteria focus on sources that analyse zakat's impact on poverty alleviation, income redistribution, and social welfare enhancement in the context of SDGs. The analytical framework integrates Islamic economic principles with contemporary sustainability paradigms to assess how zakat-based financial mechanisms can serve as an effective instrument for achieving economic resilience, financial inclusion, and social justice. To ensure academic rigour, thematic analysis is employed to identify recurring patterns and key themes in the literature, allowing for a structured synthesis of findings. The study also critically evaluates the institutional frameworks governing zakat collection and distribution, assessing their efficiency in promoting sustainable economic growth. By contextualising zakat within global sustainability objectives, this research offers a comprehensive analysis of its potential as a policy tool for fostering equitable economic development in Muslim-majority and minority societies.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of *zakat* within the Islamic economic system significantly contributes to economic growth and sustainable development. The data analysis reveals that the distribution of *zakat* has a positive impact on poverty alleviation, social welfare enhancement, and the strengthening of productive economic sectors. This is consistent with previous studies, which emphasise that *zakat* serves as an effective economic redistribution instrument, fostering social justice and increasing household purchasing power (Sapitri et al., 2024; Ma'ruf et al., 2022).

3.1. The Economic Role of *Zakat*

From an economic development perspective, *zakat* is not merely a charitable mechanism providing financial assistance to the poor but also serves as a source of capital for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (Rahmat, & Apriliani, 2022). The integration of *zakat* into productive economic programmes has demonstrated its ability to enhance beneficiaries' financial independence,

thereby fostering inclusive economic growth (Siagian & Nasution, 2024). Empirical evidence suggests that in regions where *zakat* is allocated towards entrepreneurial and vocational training, beneficiaries experience long-term financial stability, leading to reduced dependency on charitable aid.

A case study by Pida & Zein (2025) on *zakat* as a sustainable economic development tool found that structured *zakat* disbursement to MSMEs led to an average income increase of 30% among participants within two years. This reinforces the argument that the transformation of *zakat* from mere consumption-based assistance to productive financing plays a crucial role in economic empowerment.

3.2. Governance and Efficiency of *Zakat* Distribution

The effectiveness of *zakat* in promoting economic growth is largely contingent on the governance system in place. Prior studies by Jallow (2024) highlight that a lack of transparency and professionalism in *zakat* management institutions significantly hampers the full economic potential of *zakat* distribution. In some jurisdictions, inefficient administration and bureaucratic constraints result in delays and misallocations, reducing the intended socio-economic impact.

To address this issue, several countries have introduced digitalisation in *zakat* collection and distribution. For instance, in Indonesia, the implementation of digital payment systems and blockchain-based *zakat* tracking mechanisms has improved both efficiency and transparency in fund allocation (Muttaqin & Nasir, 2024). This technological integration ensures that funds reach the intended recipients in a timely manner while minimising the risks of mismanagement.

3.3. *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

From the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, *zakat* plays a fundamental role in ensuring long-term social welfare through the fulfilment of basic needs and the promotion of economic self-sufficiency. The concept of *hiḍḍ al-māl* (preservation of wealth) within *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* aligns closely with the principles of sustainable economic empowerment, reinforcing the role of *zakat* in achieving financial stability among recipients (Munir & Salahuddin, 2023).

Furthermore, *zakat* distribution corresponds to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 1 (*No Poverty*), Goal 8 (*Decent Work and Economic Growth*), and Goal 10 (*Reduced Inequalities*). Empirical studies indicate that in regions where *zakat* is integrated into government welfare programmes, there is a measurable decline in income disparity and an increase in employment opportunities (Siagian & Nasution, 2024).

3.4. The Role of *Zakat* in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The role of *zakat* in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is highly significant, as *zakat* functions as an Islamic financial instrument designed to redistribute wealth and reduce social and economic disparities (Rahmat, et.al, 2024). Unlike conventional financial assistance, *zakat* integrates spiritual obligations with socio-economic policies, ensuring sustainable poverty reduction and equitable economic opportunities (Ahmed, 2023). The following sections explore the multifaceted contributions of *zakat* in addressing the SDGs in greater detail.

1) Poverty Alleviation (SDG 1 – No Poverty)

One of the primary objectives of *zakat* is to alleviate poverty (*al-fuqarā' wa al-masākīn*), ensuring that financially disadvantaged individuals have access to essential resources. The direct financial assistance provided through *zakat* allows recipients to meet their basic needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter, thereby reducing extreme poverty (Sabit et al., 2024). In countries where *zakat* is systematically collected and distributed, studies have shown a significant decline in poverty rates. For instance, a study in Malaysia found that *zakat* distribution reduced poverty incidence among its recipients by 48% within five years (Mohamed & Rahman, 2024). Moreover, *zakat* functions beyond immediate financial aid by supporting long-term poverty alleviation initiatives. Productive *zakat* programmes, such as business start-up capital and vocational training, ensure that beneficiaries can generate their own income, reducing dependence on financial aid over time (Ibrahim & Yusof, 2024).

2) Ending Hunger and Enhancing Food Security (SDG 2 – Zero Hunger)

Food security is a fundamental component of economic stability and well-being. *Zakat* contributes to SDG 2 by ensuring that vulnerable populations have access to sufficient, nutritious, and safe food sources. In many Muslim-majority countries, *zakat* institutions distribute food packages during times of crisis, including droughts, economic downturns, and humanitarian emergencies (Hassan et al., 2023). Beyond immediate relief, *zakat* also supports long-term agricultural sustainability by providing financial aid to farmers, enabling them to purchase quality seeds, fertilisers, and farming equipment. For example, the implementation of *zakat* funds in Sudan's rural regions led to a 35% increase in agricultural productivity, reducing the risk of food shortages (Salim & Abu Bakar, 2024).

3) Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being)

Healthcare accessibility remains a major challenge for low-income populations. *Zakat* can be allocated towards subsidising medical treatments, building healthcare facilities, and financing vaccination programmes. Studies indicate that *zakat*-funded healthcare initiatives have significantly reduced infant mortality rates and improved maternal health outcomes (Rahmat et al., 2024). In Pakistan, *zakat* funds are utilised to finance free dialysis treatments for underprivileged patients, reducing the financial burden on families struggling with chronic illnesses (Khan & Ali, 2023). Similarly, in Indonesia, *zakat* institutions collaborate with hospitals to provide free medical check-ups and treatments for the *asnaf* (eligible recipients of *zakat*), ensuring healthcare inclusivity (Sufyan & Ridwan, 2024).

4) Quality Education (SDG 4 – Quality Education)

Education is a critical factor in economic mobility and sustainable development. *Zakat* institutions play a vital role in financing scholarships for underprivileged students, supporting school infrastructure development, and funding skills-based training (Fauzi & Hasan, 2023). For example, in Egypt, *zakat* funds are allocated for higher education scholarships, enabling students from low-income backgrounds to access university education. Research suggests that 72% of *zakat*-funded students in Islamic universities secured stable employment post-graduation, demonstrating the long-term economic benefits of educational support (Ibrahim & Noor, 2024). Furthermore, *zakat* has been instrumental in supporting refugee education programmes. In Jordan, *zakat* funds are used to cover tuition fees for displaced Syrian children, ensuring they receive continuous schooling despite economic hardships (Mahmoud & Sulaiman, 2023).

5) Gender Equality (SDG 5 – Gender Equality)

Empowering women through economic participation is essential for achieving gender equality. *Zakat* can be allocated to initiatives that support women's education, entrepreneurship, and workforce participation. In Bangladesh, *zakat*-based microfinance programmes provide business capital to female entrepreneurs, leading to a 40% increase in women-owned businesses within five years (Rahman & Yasmin, 2024). Additionally, *zakat* funds can support training centres focused on women's skill development, enabling them to gain employment in high-demand industries. This approach not only enhances gender equality but also contributes to overall economic growth and poverty reduction (Kamil & Azam, 2024).

6) Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth)

By facilitating microfinancing, business development, and vocational training, *zakat* fosters economic self-sufficiency. Countries with structured *zakat* disbursement systems have witnessed a significant reduction in unemployment rates, particularly among marginalised communities (Fauzan & Ridwan, 2024). For instance, in Nigeria, *zakat* funds were allocated to provide vocational training for unemployed youth, resulting in a 25% employment rate increase within two years (Usman & Salisu, 2023). Furthermore, *zakat*-based investments in small enterprises have strengthened local economies, allowing recipients to generate sustainable incomes (Hamza & Yusuf, 2024).

7) Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities)

Income inequality remains one of the biggest global economic challenges. *Zakat* serves as a wealth redistribution mechanism that ensures financial inclusivity by channelling resources from affluent individuals to those in need (Rahman et al., 2024). Empirical evidence from Indonesia suggests that systematic *zakat* distribution significantly reduces income disparity, especially in urban areas where economic gaps are more pronounced (Hidayat & Maulana, 2024).

8) Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)

Good governance in *zakat* institutions strengthens public trust in Islamic financial systems and promotes social justice. Transparent and accountable *zakat* management fosters economic stability, reducing the likelihood of financial corruption and wealth hoarding (Ilyas & Karim, 2023). A case study in Turkey demonstrated that blockchain-based *zakat* tracking systems enhanced efficiency and minimised fund misallocation, ensuring that financial aid reached the rightful beneficiaries (Ozturk & Yildirim, 2024). This transparency fosters social harmony and strengthens institutional credibility.

9) Additional Contributions to SDGs: Opportunities in Zakat Management

Beyond the key SDGs discussed, *zakat* also presents significant opportunities for addressing other global development goals, particularly in the areas of clean water, sanitation, and sustainable urban development. However, the feasibility of these initiatives must be examined through the lens of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* to ensure their alignment with the fundamental objectives of Islamic law.

Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6)

Access to clean water and adequate sanitation is a fundamental human right that directly impacts public health, economic productivity, and overall well-being (Rahmat, Hurriyati, & Dirgantari, 2022). In many regions, water scarcity and poor sanitation disproportionately affect impoverished communities, leading to preventable diseases and high mortality rates (Rahim & Abdullah, 2023). Theoretically, *zakat* funds could be channelled into water purification projects, construction of wells, and improvement of sanitation infrastructure to address this issue.

From a *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* perspective, ensuring access to clean water aligns with the preservation of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), one of the core objectives of Islamic law (Chapra, 2016). Given that *zakat* is primarily intended for *asnaf* (eligible recipients), prioritising clean water initiatives in communities suffering from severe water insecurity would be justifiable under Islamic legal principles. However, challenges arise in ensuring that such projects remain within the scope of *zakat*'s immediate redistributive function rather than shifting towards general infrastructure funding, which may not directly benefit the designated *asnaf* groups.

For instance, in rural Indonesia, *zakat*-based water projects have successfully provided clean drinking water to marginalised communities, improving their health conditions and reducing the burden of waterborne diseases (Hidayat & Maulana, 2024). These targeted interventions demonstrate that, when structured effectively, *zakat* management can contribute to SDG 6 while remaining consistent with Islamic jurisprudence.

Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11)

Urbanisation has led to an increase in housing shortages, environmental degradation, and socioeconomic disparities, particularly in developing nations. The possibility of *zakat* funding low-income housing projects and urban sustainability initiatives represents an innovative approach to poverty alleviation and social welfare. The *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* framework supports the idea of providing shelter to the underprivileged as it aligns with the preservation of wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) and dignity (*ḥifẓ al-'ird*). The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) emphasised the importance of ensuring that individuals have a safe and dignified living space, a principle that can be extended to modern urban development (Al-Qaradawi, 2022).

Some contemporary *zakat* institutions have explored housing assistance models where *zakat* funds are used to provide interest-free housing loans or subsidised rental schemes for the poor (Ibrahim & Noor, 2024). However, a key concern is whether large-scale urban infrastructure projects fall within the permissible scope of *zakat* expenditure. Unlike direct financial aid, housing development requires long-term investment and maintenance, which may stretch beyond *zakat*'s immediate redistributive purpose. In Turkey, for instance, *zakat* funds have been utilised in collaboration with *waqf* (Islamic endowment) initiatives to provide sustainable housing solutions for low-income families (Ozturk & Yildirim, 2024). This hybrid model, where *zakat* serves as an initial fund for property acquisition while *waqf* ensures long-term maintenance, presents a viable strategy for achieving SDG 11 without compromising Islamic legal principles.

3.5. The Need for a *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*-Oriented Framework in *Zakat* Management

While *zakat* has the potential to contribute to various SDGs beyond poverty alleviation, its implementation must be carefully structured to align with Islamic legal principles. A *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*-oriented approach ensures that:

- 1) The primary beneficiaries remain the designated *asnaf* groups.
- 2) Projects address immediate and essential needs rather than shifting towards general infrastructure development.
- 3) Sustainable financial mechanisms, such as *waqf-zakat* integration, are explored to prevent the depletion of *zakat* funds.

Future research and policy development should focus on establishing clear guidelines for the inclusion of water, sanitation, and housing projects within *zakat* distribution frameworks. With proper governance, *zakat* can be leveraged not only as a tool for social welfare but also as a driver for broader sustainable development, ultimately contributing to a just and equitable society.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the significant role of *zakat* in fostering economic growth, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development within the framework of the Islamic economic system. The empirical evidence presented confirms that *zakat*, when effectively integrated into economic and social policies, serves as a powerful redistribution mechanism, reducing income disparities and enhancing financial independence among beneficiaries. The transformation of *zakat* from a consumption-based assistance model to a productive financing instrument has demonstrably contributed to the long-term financial stability of recipients, particularly through its support for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Moreover, the integration of *zakat* within the governance structures of various countries highlights its potential in aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty eradication, economic growth, and social justice.

The practical implications of this study suggest that optimising *zakat* distribution towards productive economic initiatives, such as entrepreneurship and vocational training, can significantly enhance its effectiveness in fostering financial self-sufficiency. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of governance and technological integration in ensuring the efficiency and transparency of *zakat* institutions. The adoption of digital payment systems and blockchain-based tracking mechanisms has been shown to improve the accuracy and timeliness of *zakat* allocation, thereby minimising risks associated with mismanagement and corruption. Policymakers and *zakat* institutions should therefore prioritise digitalisation and regulatory reforms to enhance the impact of *zakat* on economic and social development.

From a policy perspective, the study underscores the need for a *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*-oriented framework in *zakat* management to ensure that its implementation remains aligned with Islamic legal principles while maximising its contributions to sustainable development. Policymakers should consider integrating *zakat* with broader governmental welfare programmes to enhance its effectiveness in addressing structural poverty and economic inequalities. Additionally, the incorporation of *zakat* within national development strategies, particularly in Muslim-majority countries, could provide a sustainable

and faith-based approach to achieving economic justice and social welfare. Future policy initiatives should also explore the feasibility of integrating zakat with waqf (Islamic endowments) to establish long-term funding mechanisms for social development projects.

Despite its significant contributions, this study has certain limitations. Firstly, the research primarily focuses on zakat's economic impact without extensively examining its socio-cultural and religious dimensions, which may also influence its effectiveness. Secondly, variations in zakat governance across different jurisdictions present challenges in establishing universal best practices, necessitating further comparative studies across diverse socio-economic contexts. Lastly, while empirical evidence supports the role of zakat in economic empowerment, longitudinal studies are required to assess its sustained impact over extended periods. Future research should therefore focus on evaluating the long-term effects of zakat-funded initiatives and exploring innovative models for enhancing its efficiency in addressing contemporary socio-economic challenges.

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