

The Transformation of Zakat: From a Religious Obligation to a Socio-Economic Empowerment Mechanism

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received Mar, 2025 Revised Mar, 2025 Accepted Mar, 2025</p>	<p>Zakat is a key Islamic institution designed to promote social welfare, as mandated in the Qur'an and Sunnah. However, in contemporary practice, zakat has not yet effectively addressed economic disparities within the Muslim community. Fazlur Rahman, a leading modern Islamic scholar, reinterprets zakat using the <i>Double Movement</i> method, aligning its objectives with present socio-economic realities and advocating its integration into fiscal policies, including its potential role as an Islamic tax system. Through library research on Rahman's works and secondary sources, this study finds that zakat is fundamentally a divine mandate aimed at transforming <i>mustahik</i> (recipients) into <i>muzakki</i> (givers) through productive means, fostering economic self-sufficiency. Rahman views zakat as evolving from a purely spiritual obligation into a mechanism of social empowerment, historically administered from the time of Prophet Muhammad SAW to today as a tool for economic redistribution and justice. The study highlights the <i>ideal moral implications</i> of zakat in enhancing productivity and social welfare. Key aspects include effective zakat management, equitable distribution, timing, and measurement, which can be adapted to modern economic conditions. By implementing these principles, zakat can function as a sustainable instrument for economic empowerment, ensuring both spiritual and material prosperity within the Muslim community.</p>
<p>Keywords:</p> <p>Zakat Social Welfare Fazlur Rahman Double Movement Economic Disparity</p>	
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1. INTRODUCTION

The methodology of Quranic interpretation continues to evolve over time. Broadly speaking, approaches to the Quran are divided into textual and contextual perspectives. In classical methods, the understanding of the concept *shalih li kulli*

zaman wa makan tends to be textualist, focusing strictly on the literal meaning of the verses [1] This method often encounters challenges in addressing contemporary issues as it primarily emphasizes historical contexts without developing the substance of the text in a modern interpretative framework [2]

In response to the limitations of classical methods, more contextual interpretative approaches have emerged, such as Fazlur Rahman's *Double Movement* methodology [3] Rahman proposed this method to extract the universal moral messages within the Quran, making them applicable to modern social, economic, and cultural contexts [4] Through this approach, Quranic texts are not only understood within the context of their revelation but are also transformed to remain relevant to contemporary challenges..

One of the critical issues that can be analyzed using the *Double Movement* method is zakat. As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has an institutionally regulated zakat system. However, reality suggests that zakat has not yet significantly alleviated poverty [5] In this context, reinterpreting zakat through Fazlur Rahman's approach becomes essential in identifying the ideal moral principles that can be adapted into a more productive and impactful zakat distribution system.

The objective of this study is to elucidate the fundamental concept of the *Double Movement* theory developed by Fazlur Rahman as an approach to understanding the Quran contextually. Furthermore, this research aims to analyze how this method can be applied in the interpretation of Quranic verses on zakat, thereby uncovering the moral ideals embedded within them. By comprehending the universal principles inherent in the teachings of zakat, this study seeks to establish its relevance and application in the modern context, particularly in enhancing the effectiveness and productivity of zakat distribution to support the well-being of the Muslim community.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The *Double Movement* method introduced by Fazlur Rahman is a contemporary exegetical approach that seeks to bridge the meaning of the Quran with its historical context while ensuring its relevance in the

present era. Previous studies have explored the application of this method across various themes, including zakat, Islamic law, and other contemporary issues.

2.1 Aktualisasi Teks Alquran Li Kulli Zamân Wa Makân (Pendekatan Double Movement Fazlur Rahman)

This study by Y. Sulthoni from IAIN Ponorogo examines how Fazlur Rahman applies the *Double Movement* method in interpreting Quranic verses contextually. The research highlights that this method does not solely focus on the textual meaning of the verses but also considers the socio-historical background in which they were revealed.

2.2 Hermeneutika Double Movement Fazlur Rahman: Mewujudkan Hukum Islam yang Lebih Eksistensial

This research highlights how the *Double Movement* method can be utilized to interpret Islamic law in a way that aligns with contemporary developments. The article emphasizes that Islamic law should not be understood rigidly but must be contextualized to remain relevant to the lives of Muslims in the modern era.

2.3 Reinterpretasi Zakat dalam Alquran: Suatu Penerapan Metode Double Movement Fazlur Rahman

This research applies Fazlur Rahman's *Double Movement* method in interpreting the concept of zakat in the Quran. The study reveals the ideal moral values embedded in zakat teachings, which aim to create a more just and prosperous society. Through this approach, the reinterpretation of zakat is

expected to address modern socio-economic challenges effectively.

3. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative method with a library research approach. The primary sources of data include the works of Fazlur Rahman, classical tafsir books, and previous studies discussing zakat and the *Double Movement* method. The data analysis techniques used in this research include descriptive analysis, thematic analysis, and textual interpretation.

Fazlur Rahman is recognized as one of the leading modern Islamic thinkers who emphasized the importance of a contextual approach in understanding the Quran. In his seminal work, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (1993), he developed the *Double Movement* methodology, aiming to extract universal moral messages from the Quran and adapt them to contemporary contexts. According to Rahman, classical Quranic interpretation often becomes trapped in a literalist understanding, failing to adequately consider the historical aspects of revelation [4].

Fazlur Rahman's *Double Movement* method consists of two key stages:

1. First Movement: Understanding the historical background of a Quranic revelation to uncover the moral message embedded within it.
2. Second Movement: Contextualizing that moral message so that it can be applied to contemporary social and economic situations. [4]

This concept is particularly relevant in interpreting Quranic verses on zakat, where zakat during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not merely an individual obligation but also functioned as a social system designed to ensure the welfare of the Muslim community.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fazlur Rahman presents a distinct perspective on zakat in the Quran. According to him, zakat is not merely an individual act of worship but also encompasses a broader social dimension. It functions as a financial mechanism that can be implemented as a taxation instrument within an Islamic society [6]. Rahman emphasizes that during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), zakat was not only allocated to support the underprivileged but also played a crucial role in state financing, including sectors such as defense, education, and social welfare[6].

According to Rahman, the concept of zakat has undergone significant transformation throughout Islamic history. Initially, zakat was a voluntary practice, relying on individual awareness and initiative. However, over time, it evolved into a collective obligation managed by the government or official institutions, ensuring a more structured and systematic distribution[7]. Rahman also emphasizes that in the Quran, zakat is often mentioned alongside the prohibition of *riba* (usury). This association suggests that zakat serves as the antithesis of exploitative economic systems [8]. Furthermore, several contemporary Muslim economists view zakat as a key instrument for wealth redistribution and the mitigation of economic inequality [9].

In interpreting zakat within a broader context, Rahman applies the *Double Movement* method, which involves examining Quranic verses in light of the social and economic conditions at the time of their revelation and then extracting their underlying moral principles to be applied in the modern era [10]. According to him, zakat can be optimized as an effective economic redistribution tool and has the potential to replace secular taxation in Muslim-majority countries [4].

4.1 The Transformation of Zakat: From Personal obligation to State Taxation

One of Fazlur Rahman's central ideas regarding zakat is that it should not be understood merely as a religious obligation but also as a mechanism for wealth redistribution [10]. Rahman argue that the zakat system must be reformed to better align with modern economic conditions, including adjustments in its rates and coverage.[11]

In his interpretation of Surah At-Taubah (9:60), Rahman emphasizes that the criteria for zakat recipients should not be understood rigidly but should instead be adapted to contemporary societal needs [12]. For instance, he proposes that the category of *fī sabīlillāh* (in the cause of Allah) can be expanded to include public services such as education and healthcare [13].

Historically, the role of zakat has undergone significant transformations. In the early Islamic period, zakat served as a primary economic instrument of the state. However, over time, its role diminished, first replaced by the waqf (endowment) system during the medieval period and later by modern taxation systems under colonial rule. As a result, zakat's function in the economies of Muslim-majority countries has been significantly reduced [14].

4.2 Zakat as an Instrument for Socio-Economic Balance

In the context of Islamic economics, Fazlur Rahman views zakat as a solution to social inequality that persists in many Muslim-majority countries [15]. He emphasizes that an ideal zakat system is one that effectively reduces the gap between the wealthy and the poor. This perspective aligns with Surah Al-Hashr (59:7), which reminds that wealth should not circulate exclusively among the affluent [16].

Rahman also underscores the necessity of modernizing the zakat

system to ensure its relevance in contemporary economic conditions. He proposes that zakat should not be limited to gold, silver, and agricultural produce, as prescribed in classical Islamic jurisprudence, but should also encompass modern financial assets, including income from investments, stock ownership, and digital assets [17].

4.3 Productive Zakat: Towards Economic Self-Sufficiency

One of the most influential contributions of Fazlur Rahman's thought is the concept of productive zakat [18]. He argues that zakat should not merely be distributed in the form of consumptive aid but should instead be utilized to create sustainable economic opportunities [19]. In this way, zakat recipients (*mustahik*) can eventually transform into zakat contributors (*muzakki*) in the future [8].

Critiquing traditional zakat distribution systems that primarily focus on cash assistance, Rahman emphasizes the importance of allocating zakat funds for economic empowerment [20]. He suggests that zakat should be distributed in the form of business capital, education, or vocational training, enabling recipients to become financially independent rather than remaining dependent on aid [21]. This concept has been successfully implemented in several Muslim-majority countries, such as Malaysia, where zakat is used to fund educational programs and provide microfinance-based capital support for small businesses [22].

4.4 Revitalizing Zakat in the Modern Economic System

Fazlur Rahman highlights the necessity of revitalizing the zakat system in Muslim-majority countries to enhance its contribution to economic development [23]. He argues that zakat should be managed by highly transparent institutions, ensuring its effective utilization for infrastructure funding and social services [24]. In this way, zakat

would not merely remain a religious obligation but could function as an integral part of a broader economic system [25].

Furthermore, Rahman critiques the fact that many Muslim countries have yet to successfully integrate zakat into their modern economic frameworks. He firmly believes that if zakat is effectively managed and

incorporated into the state's taxation system, secular taxes could be reduced or even eliminated. Through this approach, a more equitable Islamic economic system could be established, significantly reducing the socio-economic disparities prevalent in many Muslim-majority nations.

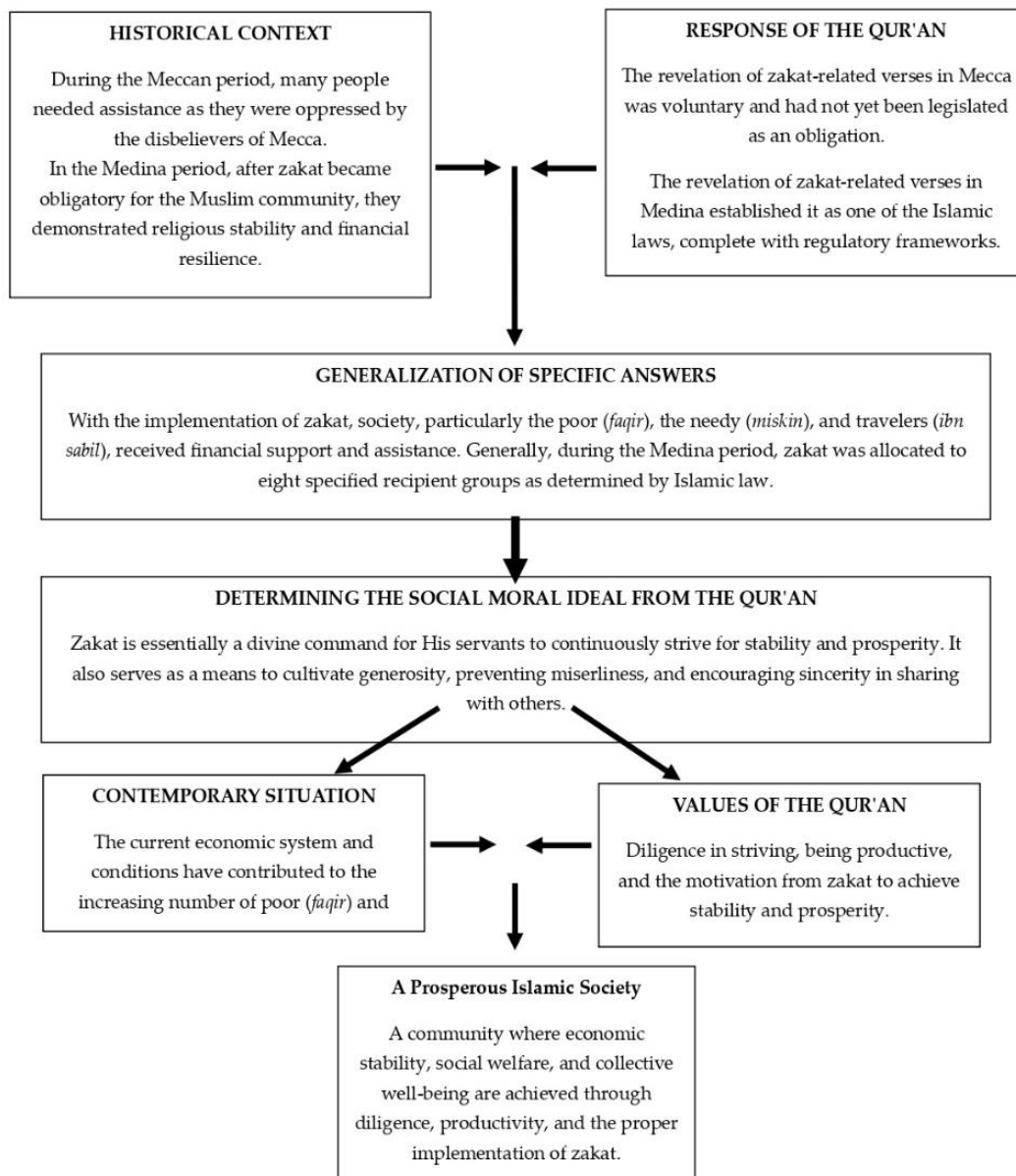


Figure 1. Research Result Model

5. CONCLUSION

Fazlur Rahman offers a comprehensive perspective on zakat, positioning it as a socio-economic instrument

that extends beyond its role as a spiritual obligation. He emphasizes that zakat should have the potential to replace secular taxation and become an integral part of the economic

system in Muslim-majority countries. Furthermore, he introduces the concept of productive zakat as a strategy for fostering economic self-sufficiency among its recipients.

With a transparent and well-structured zakat system, Muslim countries can harness zakat as a primary tool for achieving a more inclusive and equitable economic well-being. By revitalizing its management and aligning it with contemporary economic needs, zakat can serve as a transformative mechanism for reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development.

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May this work contribute to the advancement of zakat studies and Islamic economic thought. Any shortcomings remain my own responsibility.


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