

Phenomenological Study of Career Women as Amil Zakat in Islamic Philanthropy Institutions

Феноменологическое исследование карьеры женщин как амил закят в исламских благотворительных институтах

Studi Fenomenologi pada Wanita Karier sebagai Amil Zakat di Lembaga Filantropi Islam

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Amil zakat or zakat collector in Islamic charities is not a dream job due to the small salary received. Due to the unpopularity of the job, many women fill the position, which religiously is generally done by men. This article will reveal the meaning of women as amil zakat workers in Islamic philanthropic institutions. **Methods:** This study used a phenomenological approach. **Findings:** There are six themes that lead to the meaning of women as amil zakat: work for the world and the hereafter, work that calms the heart, compatibility of personal and work, opportunity to understand Islam and regulate themselves, media for friendship and expansion of friendship, and metal training forum. **Implications:** Although amil zakat is not a job that Muslim scholars are interested in, organisational leaders need strategies to retain amil zakat workers. Mental strengthening and building an Islamic organisational culture are considered capable of producing comfort at work. **Originality:** Past studies have focussed on the debate of amil zakat profession practised by women.

Keywords: Career woman; Amil zakat; Islamic philanthropy institution; Phenomenological approach.

АБСТРАКТНЫЙ

Цель: Амил закят или сборщик закята в исламских благотворительных организациях не является работой мечты из-за небольшой зарплаты. Из-за непопулярности этой работы многие женщины занимают эту должность, которую по религии обычно выполняют мужчины. В этой статье мы расскажем о значении женщин в качестве амил-закатчиков в исламских благотворительных учреждениях. **Методы:** В данном исследовании использовался феноменологический подход. **Выводы:** Существует шесть тем, которые приводят к смыслу женщин в качестве амил закят: работа для мира и будущего, работа, которая успокаивает сердце, совместимость личного и рабочего, возможность понять ислам и регулировать себя, средства для дружбы и расширения дружбы, а также форум для обучения металлу. **Последствия:** Хотя амил закят - это не та работа, в которой заинтересованы мусульманские ученые, организационным лидерам нужны стратегии для удержания работников амил закят. Укрепление психики и создание исламской организационной культуры считаются способными обеспечить комфорт на работе. **Оригинальность:** Прошлые исследования были сосредоточены на обсуждении профессии амил-закат, которую практикуют женщины.

Ключевые слова: Карьерная женщина; *Amil Zakat*; исламский филантропический институт; феноменологический подход.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan: Amil zakat atau pengumpul zakat di badan amal Islam bukanlah pekerjaan impian karena kecilnya gaji yang diterima. Karena tidak populernya pekerjaan ini, banyak perempuan yang mengisi posisi yang secara agama umumnya dilakukan oleh laki-laki. Artikel ini akan mengupas makna perempuan sebagai amil zakat di lembaga filantropi Islam. **Metode:** Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi. **Temuan:** Terdapat enam tema yang mengarah pada pemaknaan perempuan sebagai amil zakat, yaitu: pekerjaan untuk dunia dan akhirat, pekerjaan yang menentramkan hati, kesesuaian antara pribadi dan pekerjaan, kesempatan untuk memahami Islam dan mengatur diri sendiri, media silaturahmi dan perluasan pertemanan, dan forum pelatihan metal. **Implikasi:** Meskipun amil zakat bukanlah pekerjaan yang diminati oleh para cendekiawan Muslim, para pemimpin organisasi membutuhkan strategi untuk mempertahankan pekerja amil zakat. Penguatan mental dan membangun budaya organisasi yang islami dinilai mampu menghasilkan kenyamanan dalam bekerja. **Orisinalitas:** Penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya berfokus pada perdebatan profesi amil zakat yang dilakukan oleh perempuan.

Kata kunci: Wanita karir; Amil zakat; Lembaga filantropi Islam; Pendekatan fenomenologi.

A. INTRODUCTION

Zakat collector or often known as *amil zakat* plays an important role in collecting zakat. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad, Amil Zakat took part in the welfare of the people, so that the person appointed to be *amil* is a person who is truly trustworthy (Agusti, Arsela, & Ashari, 2023; Arini, 2023). Bakir explained that there are two main roles of *amil zakat*, two of which are: collecting zakat, this activity is carried out by going around to people's homes to pick up zakat directly instead of just waiting for zakat to be paid, and the next task of an *amil* is to look for the poor, this activity is carried out with the aim that the zakat distributed later will not be misdirected (Baqir, 2021).

The role of women as Amil Zakat is a way to show the potential or power of women that can be actualised. this can also be believed as a form of *women empowerment*. The statement of women as Amil Zakat becomes controversial among scholars, as some scholars argue that *amil* must be from among men. Meanwhile, according to Imam al-Mawardi, women may become *amil zakat* just like men. *Amil zakat* does not have to be male; women can become *amil zakat* as long as they fulfil the conditions: *baligh*, rational, independent, Islamic, trustworthy, and understand the law of *zakat* (Juriyanto, 2021). In addition, women as *amil zakat* are considered to be able to attract interest in paying *zakat*, especially among women themselves (Bhari, et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, this profession is less desirable and less popular. This can be seen from the number of Muslims who are not interested in the *amil* profession. Although Azzani has explained that the *amil* profession in *zakat* management institutions is a profession of choice not escape. However, this profession is still less attractive for reasons related to the salary or profit received (Nasrullah, 2019). because indeed people who work as *amil* do not get a salary but they get 1/8 or 12.5 per cent of the *zakat* collected for 1 month as *amil* rights (Syafari & Anggraeni, 2018).

The task of an *amil* is not easy, it requires professional people. *Amil* is not always about people who have deep religious knowledge (Nugraha and Zen, 2020). But in this case, it requires people who are experts in certain fields. *Amil's* mission is not just to provide an overview of *zakat* for Muslims. More than that, *amil's* duties are very technical. *Amil's* main task is to collect, distribute, and utilise *zakat*. Modern management is needed so that *zakat* can be managed properly. Even in the management of *zakat*, people who have more knowledge are needed, for example information technology experts, accounting, auditing, marketing, management and experts in other fields so that the management of *zakat* can run effectively (Supriyadi, 2020).

Previous studies on *amil zakat* have been conducted several times. The studies seem to be spread in four themes: 1) strategy field; 2) management field; 3) role of *amil*; 4) *zakat*, *infaq* and *waqf* volunteer; 5) phenomenological study. The five themes, it turns out to overlap on the management of *amil zakat*. Hasanah found that with a mental revolution movement in the three elements of *zakat*, the welfare and independence of the people will be realised (Kalimah, 2018; Kalimah 2020; Wijaya, 2020; Tolah, 2021). Unfortunately, past studies have not explored more deeply about how this woman interprets her work as *amil zakat* (Hasanah, 2020; Amal, Azahriana, & Yasmin, 2022; Eliza, 2020). This study aims to explain

the meaning of the *amil zakat* profession in Islamic philanthropy institutions for women. This study is considered important because it not only explains the intended purpose but is also able to cover the shortcomings of previous studies.

B. METHODS

The method used in this research is a qualitative method using a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach is related to how a person understands the events they experience daily. Phenomenological research seeks to explain or reveal the meaning or events experienced by individuals or groups in real terms. In this way it forms reality. Because phenomenological research is conducted naturally, the results obtained are consistent with actual events and the researcher is free to analyse the data obtained (Creswell, 2014). In the process, researchers apply hermeneutic phenomenological research, which focuses on the interpretation of life and life experiences (Hamzah, 2020).

The identification of research informants, which includes the following criteria, begins this research process: 1) informants have at least 2 years of experience in collecting and distributing zakat; 2) work in zakat institutions or mosques; 3) have a broad insight into the zakat profession. We identified all the institutions in Bengkulu city and found three places where women worked as zakat amil. The three institutions are Lembaga Amil Zakat Nasional Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah (Laznas DII) Bengkulu Branch, Lembaga Amil Zakat Muhammadiyah North Bengkulu (LazisMu) North Bengkulu Branch, and Badan Amil Zakat Nasional (Baznas) Bengkulu Province. The data collected relates to the lives of women working as Amil Zakat professionals, job descriptions, success factors, professional challenges, and supporting data such as institutional structures and peer reinforcement. The demographic data of the informants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. List of Informant

Sn.	Pseudonym	Age	Last Education	Status	Working Time
1	Zahra (Laznas DDI)	37	Bachelor of Accounting	Married	3 years
2	Fabiya (Laznas DDI)	29	Bachelor of Agriculture	Married	2 years
3	Siti (Lazis Muhammadiyah)	41	Bachelor of Education	Married	5 years
4	Putri (Baznas Bengkulu)	28	Bachelor of Social	Not Married	2 years
5	Sonya (Baznas Bengkulu)	36	Senior High School	Not Married	3 years

Sources: Primary data, 2024

Data analysis in qualitative research is carried out in two stages: analysing the data while the researcher is in the field, and analysing the data after the researcher completes the data collection tasks. The fieldwork lasted for four months and was carried out in two periods of time: June, July and September 2023 and January 2024 as the data verification period. Triangulation of techniques, persistence of observation and iterative verification were used to test the validity of the data.

C. RESULTS

It turns out that women who work as *amil zakat* found forty-five categorisations which are grouped into six themes: 1) Working for the World and the Hereafter; 2) Work that Soothes the Heart; 3) Person job-fit; 4) Opportunity to Better Understand Islam and Self-organisation; 5) Media Silaturahmi and

Relationship Expansion; 6) Mental Training Container.

1. Theme 1: Working for the World and the Hereafter

Preparation for the Hereafter emerged from Zahra and Fabiya's statements. They interpret the Preparation for the Hereafter as a job that not only works for the world, but more than that with this job they also get a bonus for preparation in the hereafter. This statement is in accordance with Zahra's explanation, which states that her current job is part of Da'wah activities. For Zahra, she is currently working for two things at once, namely working for the world and working for the hereafter.

"The current work is picking up *infaq*, sometimes leaving at dawn for the dawn agenda, so even if we leave at night we have a purpose to worship, and indirectly we work as an intermediary for *infaq* from donors so even though we don't have the money to give *infaq*, we become the intermediary. I have a share of the reward. This is my afterlife savings..." (Zahra, Laznas DDI)

Zahra's explanation means that her current job is a source of satisfaction for her. Because besides working for the world she also works for the hereafter. While other people work to pursue the world, Zahra works for two things at once. In addition, being an intermediary for *infaq* from donors is the most special thing about her job. Although Zahra is not able to help people with her own money, she is able to help others by intermediating *infaq* from donors.

This statement also came from Fabiya who stated that in addition to working for the world we also work for the afterlife, the fatigue of working in the world will be sweet in the afterlife. Working for worship by inviting others to goodness and introducing da'wah widely. With the activities carried out, it can provide new knowledge to the community. In addition, it is also a bridge for *infaq* from donors, this is what convinces Fabiya that she is currently working for two things at once, she is not only pursuing the world but also the hereafter.

"If you work outside, you are tired because of the world, but if you work here, you are tired for the hereafter too, so work yes, mmm for worship yes, inviting to goodness is also yes, because the work is *dawah* work..." (Fabiya, Laznas DDI)

Fabiya's explanation means that every job has its own consequences. But in this case, Fabiya believes that the fatigue of working now will be sweet in the afterlife. Work is not only to pursue the world but also to pursue the hereafter, by making current work a form of worship to invite others to goodness.

2. Theme 2: Heart-Warming Work

The work that calms the heart in question is work that has a positive impact on its employees. In addition, it can also be seen from the work environment that does not give words in the form of just to employees who are new to the world of da'wah. a work environment that does not only think about individual interests, a work environment that is able to embrace its employees to move forward together without thinking about personal interests.

This statement came from Fabiya and Zahra, both of whom have their own opinions on work that calms the heart. Fabiya stated that it was her love for the World of Da'wah that brought her to work at one

of the *amil zakat* Institutions in Bengkulu Province. For Fabiya, working is not just for the salary, comfort at work is needed to maintain the sanity of each employee. Work that calms the heart can be seen from a good work environment. A work environment that is able to have a positive impact on its employees. Not only that, for Fabiya, her work becomes fun when working with the aim of preaching.

"The environment working here is good, I meet a lot of *ustadz*, an environment whose circle is indeed *dawah*, the target is also for da'wah, because wherever we are, our position, our place is comfortable or uncomfortable, that's the first key, even though the salary is large but the environment is not good, it will definitely not be comfortable, thank God until now the environment here is still good people, because the goal here is also to preach..." (Fabiya, Laznas DDI)

Zahra's explanation means that the work environment is one of the keys to employee comfort. For Fabiya, a large salary cannot guarantee employee comfort. Employee comfort can be created through a positive work environment, where people who are in this work environment have the same goal and do not think about their respective egos.

This opinion is in line with Zahra who stated that everyone has their own version of comfort. according to Zahra, she managed to get work comfort here not because of salary reasons, but the people she met at the institution were able to have a positive impact on her life. There is no competition among fellow employees. Not only that, the way people around embrace and remind without saying just about her past is the main comfort for Zahra.

"Here it's like this, no one judges or judges, it's like this, my background is not a religious person, nor is it a person who understands religion too much, now here no one alienates, instead they embrace. but the way they convey it makes me not feel cornered. The way it is delivered is by reminding slowly. So here there is no sarcasm and cheating at work. Here the work environment is positive instead of supporting each other, here there are several teams well in working it helps each other no one thinks of their own personal interests. If, for example, the fundraising team does not know the location of a mosque that has not been visited, they will be assisted by other field teams and vice versa..." (Zahra, Laznas DDI).

Zahra's explanation means that a good work environment is a work environment that is able to provide comfort for its employees. This comfort arises from a work environment that has a positive impact on each employee, a work environment that is able to embrace each employee to achieve the desired target together.

3. Theme 3: Personal and Occupational Suitability

Person Job-fit in question is the similarity of educational background or passion possessed by each informant. Person Job-fit is a condition that describes the suitability between employee abilities and job demands. The suitability seen in this thesis is by looking at the suitability of each employee's individual perception of how much they feel suitable for their job.

Fabiya, Putri and Zahra have their own opinions about the suitability of their current jobs. Fabiya stated that her suitability for this job is in line with her love for the World of *dawah*. although different

from her educational background, Fabiya has a background in Da'wah Organisation. Fabiya feels that her current job is the most appropriate thing for her. With this job, she is able to be one of the people involved in every *dawah* event.

"Initially, I joined the Rohis organisation from high school. So I am used to it and indeed like to participate in programs and agendas that invite towards goodness. besides that, I am also a member of the Campus Da'wah Community, so when I work here it is not included in my major but I have a *besik* in the organisation. His heart also wants to be in *dawah*, so here it is indeed the realm of Da'wah and his *besik* is here in *dawah*..." (Fabiya, Laznas DDI)

Fabiya's explanation means that suitability in work does not have to be in line with the education taken. Work can just come from the pleasure that is owned towards an activity. as is the case with Fabiya who does not have a background in da'wah education but she likes things that smell like da'wah. In this case Putri stated that the suitability of her current job is in line with her education.

"I majored in *waqf zakat* management. indeed, the lessons plus being able to work here add depth." (Putri, Baznas Bengkulu)

Putri's explanation means that a job that is in line with your education will be easier to do. Unlike the previous one, Zahra has her own opinion regarding her suitability for her current job. For Zahra, her current job requires skills in speaking, where during her undergraduate education she was taught to be able to communicate well.

"When I was first hired, I was immediately put into the fundraising team. Fundraising is like marketing, so I was tested on my speaking skills. How do I convince and invite people to join the programmes offered. In addition, when I was in college, I was taught how to communicate with other people, and I also served as Chairperson of the Faculty of Library and Information Science at Bengkulu University. So at least I have skills in that field..." (Zahra, Laznas DDI)

Zahra's explanation means that job suitability is not always measured by education and organisation. In this case, Zahra is able to prove that her communication skills are one of the advantages that can be offered in the world of work. For Zahra, her communication skills are in line with her current field of work.

4. Theme 4: Opportunities to Better Understand Islam and Self-Determination

Self-organisation is defined by a change in a person from before and after entering an institution or workplace. This change can be seen in appearance or behaviour. This self-organisation can be felt by someone if he does not underestimate the things he does. Because everythi that is passed has its own meaning. This statement arises from Zahra's explanation, which states that the place where she currently works is a place where she learns. Many things she encountered in her current job, which initially only made hijab a formality at work but now she makes hijab a priority in her life. Not only that, for Zahra, her current job is the most comfortable learning place because the lessons learned in this job are permanent and applied directly in her life.

"The topic now is also in the scope of religion so indirectly we work while learning. Because

when we are older, it is difficult to learn while sitting and reading a book. At the beginning of my work, I only wore the hijab as a formality when working, outside of working hours sometimes I only used a helmet to cover my head. But after a few months of working, I realised that hijab is obligatory and I also saw other friends wearing *syar'i hijab*. Before the weekly evaluation, there must always be something called a preamble, now there are stories about the story of the companions, the story of the role models of the prophets, without realising that our knowledge will increase and if it is like this, the lesson will stick and will not be lost..." (Zahra, Laznas DDI).

Zahra's explanation means that the influence of people around will have a negative or positive impact on life. Zahra makes her current workplace a place where she learns. The current job is able to provide changes for Zahra both in terms of dressing or knowledge about religion.

5. Theme 5: Media for Sociability and Relationship Expansion

Media Silaturahmi and Expansion of Relationships in question is a place to establish friendships with people both those who are already known and those who will just get to know. In addition, the existence of relationships will build relationships between two parties or even more to achieve a goal. This is not only seen from a business perspective but can also be seen from a social perspective. This statement emerged from Siti and Zahra who stated that the place where she currently works is a place to add relationships. For Siti, by working here she gets many acquaintances from both the community and officials.

"The good thing about working here is that there are many people known, many relationships, if we stay at home, we will definitely have less relationships and will also not know information about the outside world. Besides that, if you don't work here, you probably won't know what it's like to participate in meeting activities attended by Muhammadiyah founders, every activity is also attended by great people." (Siti, Lazis Muhammadiyah of North Bengkulu)

This opinion is in line with Zahra's statement that her current workplace is not only a place to work but also as a medium for gathering and expanding relationships. This is evidenced by the changes Zahra feels, the relationships she gets now are different compared to her previous workplace. Currently, she has many good acquaintances from the community and even MUI.

"The most noticeable thing is that the relationship has changed. I mean, in the previous workplace, I met lecturers, librarians and students. If here there are great Ustadz, the community, even know people from MUI, and here you can still meet students." (Zahra, Laznas DDI)

Siti and Zahra's explanation means that in every job encountered there are different relationships. In her current job, Siti and Zahra revealed that the relationships she gets come from many circles and have a different impact on Zahra both in terms of work and social society.

6. Theme 6: Mental Training Centre

The mental training centre in question is a place to strengthen oneself in facing difficulties both in the world of work and in the community. In the world of work, a strong mentality is very much needed,

especially as *amil zakat* who is always in contact with the community. This statement is in accordance with Zahra's explanation, which states that being an *amil zakat* has its own challenges, starting from having to understand the law of zakat, having courage in the midst of society and understanding the calculation of zakat. besides that for Zahra being an *amil zakat* must be prepared with all the consequences that will be received, especially the views of the community.

"The difficulty experienced in working is that many people do not know what Laznas is. Many people refuse every time we offer a programme. There are even people who doubt us by asking this question, is it true that the money infaq will be used as capital to buy bombs and some even say that you are terrorists. In addition, the consequences of this job are that sometimes we have to leave at dawn and even go home at night, while we are women, so we have to be ready..." (Zahra, Laznas DDI)

For Fabiya, her current workplace is a place to mould her mentality by dealing with the public directly.

"There are many things that become difficulties in this work. Many people have not accepted Laznas to be in their midst, this is because people think that the programmes run will be used for personal gain. Sometimes when we come to pick up infaq, they hide, we have also received direct rejection when offering programmes to shops..." (Fabiya, Laznas DDI)

Fabiya's explanation means that being an *amil zakat* must be prepared with all the consequences that will be received. She encountered many challenges in her work, for example, people who think that the results of the programme will be used for personal interests, there are also people who think that *amil zakat* is a terrorist, people's fear is shown by hiding during the infaq pick-up process and even direct rejection when offering the programme to shops.

D. DISCUSSION

This is the first study to phenomenologically explore women's feelings as zakat fund collectors (*amil*) in Indonesia. The data has led to six themes: Work for the World and the Hereafter, Work that Soothes the Heart, Person Job-fit, Opportunity to Better Understand Islam and Self-Discipline, Media Silaturahmi and Expansion of Relationships, Containment of Mental Training. It turns out that women who work as *amil zakat* make their work a place for mental training. They interpret mental training containers as a place to forge themselves in facing difficulties in the world of work or society. because basically the current young generation is not fully able to fulfil the elements of ideal characteristics needed to support progress and success in the future. Strawberry generation represents itself as one of the real beauties but is easily fragile and destroyed when stepped on. This is in line with Kasali's opinion strawberry generation is a term for today's spoilt generation. in addition, according to Prihatina strawberry generation is a soft generation that is considered fragile and easily destroyed so it is compared to strawberries (Fauzi & Tarigan, 2023).

When women work as *amil zakat*, they feel that they are working for the world and the hereafter. They interpret working for the world and the hereafter as a form of effort in pursuing the world with the bonus of the afterlife. In Islam, work is required to be orientated not only for the world but for the hereafter

as well. This is in accordance with the opinion of [Agustina and Sari \(2020\)](#) who state that working while looking for rewards is one of the motivations that encourage a person to work. Meanwhile, according to Ida Afida et al, stated that the meaningfulness of a person's life is in his activities: working optimally and all world activities must be associated with spiritual values, meaning that they must be oriented towards God ([Afidah, et al., 2020](#); [Ahyakudin & Abduh, 2021](#)).

Women who work as *amil zakat* interpret their work as a job that calms the heart. This heart-soothing work is considered a place that is able to have a positive impact on life. In addition, it can be seen from the work environment that is able to provide a sense of security and comfort for everyone who works. At work, of course, a sense of security and comfort is needed as a way to calm the heart and raise morale. This is in line with Fahrul Rozi's opinion which states that comfort in the work environment can foster employee enthusiasm in completing their work properly. This can be seen from several aspects, such as adequate work facilities, beautiful working conditions and friendly workmates ([Nurdin, Ratnasari, & Nasrul, 2020](#)).

E. CONCLUSIONS

The researcher found the meaning of women who work as *amil zakat* in six themes: working for the world and the hereafter, a job that calms the heart, personal and work compatibility, an opportunity to better understand Islam and self-organisation, a medium of silaturahmi and relationship expansion, and a place for mental training. Finally, this article suggests that *amil zakat* should prioritise its work to focus more on the welfare of Muslims and improve the quality of service to *muzzaki*. In addition, it is important for women to be mentally strong and orientated to solve problems in the Muslim community. Leaders of Islamic philanthropy institutions need to maintain *amil zakat* who are already working by strengthening mentally and building an Islamic organisational culture that is considered capable of producing comfort at work. This research is not free from shortcomings, so future research needs to explore more informants to dig deeper into their meaning of *amil zakat*.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

This research was conducted in a balanced process. MA has processed all the data and presented it in the form of an article. NA submitted the manuscript, provided direction for deepening and refining the article during revision. CC adjusted the article to the template and provided some additional references that were considered important.

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