

**PROFILING ZAKAT RECIPIENTS AMONG ASNAF FAKIR AND MISKIN IN KUALA MUDA YAN, KEDAH: A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS**

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Received: 6 June 2025

Article Progress

Revised: 1 July 2025

Accepted: 12 July 2025

<b>Abstract</b>	<p><i>Despite its vital role in poverty alleviation, zakat distribution among asnaf fakir and asnaf miskin in Kedah faces significant challenges, particularly in accurately identifying and reaching those most in need. Inefficiencies in the allocation process can result in the misdistribution of funds, either by including ineligible recipients or overlooking deserving beneficiaries. This study provides a descriptive analysis of zakat distribution in the Kuala Muda Yan district, focusing on the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of recipients. Utilizing data from 2,810 zakat beneficiaries collected through interviews and surveys conducted by Lembaga Zakat Negeri Kedah (LZNK), the study examines key factors such as age, gender, employment status, and income levels. Beyond demographic profiling, this research investigates the transition of recipients out of the asnaf category, evaluating the extent to which zakat contributes to socioeconomic mobility. The findings highlight disparities in how different groups benefit from zakat assistance and reveal key areas for improvement. While zakat plays a crucial role in providing immediate financial relief, the study underscores the need for more strategic, long-term interventions to enhance economic self-sufficiency among recipients. Strengthening zakat distribution mechanisms can maximize its impact, ensuring a more sustainable approach to poverty reduction and reducing long-term dependency on aid.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Asnaf, Fakir, Miskin, Zakat, Zakat Beneficiaries</i></p>
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**INTRODUCTION**

Zakat, as one of the fundamental pillars of Islam, plays a vital role in poverty alleviation by providing financial assistance to eligible recipients (Bakar & Ghani, 2011), particularly the asnaf fakir and miskin (Yusuf & Derus, 2013; Rahman et al., 2019). Beyond offering

immediate relief, Zakat aims to empower recipients towards financial independence, ultimately reducing long-term dependency on aid (Hassan & Noor, 2015; Ahmed, 2021). However, despite systematic efforts to distribute Zakat effectively, economic vulnerability among recipients remains a persistent concern, especially in regions where poverty is deeply rooted (Shahatah, 2000; Salleh, 2002).

In Malaysia, Zakat collection has steadily increased over the years (Salleh, 2002). For instance, in 2023, Lembaga Zakat Negeri Kedah (LZNK) collected RM277.06 million, marking a 9.92% increase from the RM252.04 million collected in 2022. This upward trend reflects growing public awareness of Zakat obligations, driven by strategic efforts, promotional campaigns, and enhanced coordination by Zakat authorities across various states. In line with this increase, LZNK successfully distributed the entire Zakat fund for 2023, amounting to RM288.04 million. Notably, this figure exceeded the year's total collection, with an additional RM10.98 million sourced from undistributed funds carried over from 2022.

The Kuala Muda Yan district in Kedah is among the key areas where Zakat distribution plays a crucial role in supporting asnaf fakir and miskin. Understanding the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of these recipients is essential for assessing the effectiveness of Zakat distribution mechanisms (Ismail et al., 2016; Nasir, 2020). By profiling recipients, this study aims to uncover prevailing distribution trends, examine factors influencing economic mobility, and identify challenges that hinder beneficiaries from achieving self-sufficiency.

The effectiveness of Zakat distribution is not solely measured by the number of recipients benefiting from aid but also by the proportion successfully transitioning out of the asnaf fakir and miskin category (Al-Abdin, 2002) recipient. Economic independence is a key indicator of success in Zakat programs, yet existing statistics suggest that progress in this area remains slow (Saad & Abdullah, 2014; Johari et al., 2022). To explore this issue, this study analyzes LZNK data, offering a detailed examination of recipients' demographic profiles, employment status, and transition rates over a five-year period.

By providing a comprehensive analysis, this research seeks to offer valuable insights for policymakers and Zakat institutions, enabling them to refine distribution strategies for greater long-term economic impact. Additionally, the findings contribute to broader discussions on poverty alleviation (Zainon, et. al., 2022) and sustainable economic empowerment initiatives for the asnaf community.

## **RESEARCH BACKGROUND**

Poverty alleviation remains one of the most significant challenges in many Muslim-majority countries, including Malaysia, where Zakat plays a crucial role in providing financial assistance to the underprivileged (Embong, Taha & Mohd, 2013). The effectiveness of Zakat in addressing economic disparities depends on how well the aid is distributed and its impact on recipients' long-term financial independence. Despite substantial Zakat contributions, many recipients remain trapped in financial instability, with only a small percentage transitioning to economic self-sufficiency (Bakar et al., 2018).

The Kuala Muda Yan district has a substantial population of asnaf fakir and miskin, making it a relevant case study to examine Zakat distribution practices (Mahyudin, 2012; Tarimin, 2005). By analyzing demographic and economic patterns, this study provides insights into the factors influencing economic transition among recipients. The findings contribute to ongoing discussions on how Zakat institutions can enhance their strategies to facilitate sustainable financial independence among beneficiaries.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Historically, Zakat has been a key mechanism for promoting social justice and ensuring economic equity within the Islamic community. The word "Zakat" itself is derived from the Arabic root meaning "purification" and "growth," reflecting the belief that by giving Zakat, one purifies their wealth and soul, and contributes to the well-being of society (Al-Qardawi,

2005). Zakat is not simply a charitable act but a binding duty on all eligible Muslims, emphasizing the importance of wealth redistribution to reduce poverty and alleviate the suffering of vulnerable populations. Its significance is both spiritual and practical, as it fosters a sense of communal responsibility and solidarity among Muslims while directly addressing socio-economic inequalities.

The religious significance of Zakat is underscored by its mandatory nature in Islamic law (Shariah), which dictates that a certain percentage of an individual's wealth, typically 2.5% of savings, be given to eligible recipients once a year. By redistributing wealth, Zakat helps bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, aiming to uplift those in need and create a more equitable society. To show the effectiveness and efficiency, zakat institutions should improve the quality of the collection process and be able to disburse the collected amount in the same year (Hassan, 2007). In the meantime, having a data is meaningless if it cannot be transformed into an information that can help the zakat institution to properly outline a policy and decision on distribution. Historically, Zakat has served as a fundamental mechanism for promoting social justice and economic equity within the Islamic community. The term Zakat originates from the Arabic root meaning "purification" and "growth," reflecting the belief that giving Zakat purifies both wealth and the soul while contributing to societal well-being (Al-Qardawi, 2005). Unlike voluntary charity, Zakat is a religious obligation for eligible Muslims, reinforcing the principle of wealth redistribution to mitigate poverty and uplift marginalized communities. Its significance extends beyond spirituality, fostering communal responsibility and solidarity while directly addressing socio-economic disparities.

Zakat's mandatory nature in Islamic law (Shariah) requires eligible individuals to contribute a fixed percentage—typically 2.5% of savings—annually to designated beneficiaries. By redistributing wealth, Zakat bridges economic inequalities, providing essential support to those in need and fostering a more balanced society. However, the effectiveness of Zakat hinges on efficient collection and timely distribution. To maximize its impact, Zakat institutions must enhance the quality of the collection process and ensure that funds are fully disbursed within the same fiscal year (Hassan, 2007). Moreover, data-driven decision-making is critical in optimizing distribution strategies. Collecting data alone is insufficient; institutions must transform it into actionable insights to refine policies and improve the effectiveness of Zakat allocation.

Within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence, *asnaf fakir* and *asnaf miskin* are two of the eight categories of eligible Zakat recipients (Hairunnizam, Sanep & Abdul, 2009). *Asnaf fakir* refers to individuals who lack financial resources to meet even their most basic needs. They often experience chronic poverty, unstable employment, inadequate housing, and limited access to essential services (Rahman et al., 2019). In contrast, *asnaf miskin* includes individuals with some financial means but who still fall below the poverty line, struggling to maintain a minimal standard of living. Economic instability and unforeseen financial hardships can further push them into extreme poverty, making them highly vulnerable (Akbar et al., 2024). In Kedah, an *asnaf* is defined as someone whose income and assets are insufficient to sustain their daily needs. For instance, if an individual requires RM10 per day but can only afford RM3, they qualify as *asnaf* (LZNK, 2024). Recognizing the distinctions between these categories is essential for Zakat distribution, as it determines the level and nature of assistance required for meaningful socio-economic improvement.

To address the needs of *asnaf fakir* and *miskin*, the Kedah State Zakat Department has structured its assistance into five main categories: general aid for the poor, educational support for school and higher education students, self-reliance assistance, and burial aid. These funds are allocated across various sectors, including monthly welfare support, education, food security, housing, healthcare, and clothing. Among the nearly 100 distribution schemes implemented by LZNK in 2023, the Monthly Financial Distribution Scheme was the most substantial, with an allocation of RM58.43 million. This initiative benefited 15,069 families, with monthly cash assistance ranging from RM300 to RM1,000.

Such structured schemes indicate a comprehensive approach to addressing immediate financial needs, yet the long-term sustainability of recipients remains a critical concern.

Extensive research has explored the impact of Zakat on poverty alleviation and economic mobility. While Zakat provides crucial financial relief, its long-term effectiveness is contingent upon structured programs designed to promote economic self-sufficiency (Hassan & Noor, 2015; Ahmed, 2021). Several studies highlight the role of demographic factors—such as gender, age, and employment status—in influencing the success of Zakat-based interventions. Research suggests that male recipients generally have better access to employment opportunities and vocational training, whereas female recipients, particularly widows and single mothers, face additional barriers to financial independence (Ismail et al., 2016; Nasir, 2020).

Age is another key factor affecting economic transition. Younger recipients often have greater potential to engage in workforce training and entrepreneurship, whereas older recipients, particularly those above 60, may struggle due to health complications and mobility constraints. Additionally, employment status plays a crucial role in determining whether a recipient can transition out of the *asnaf* category. Studies indicate that individuals with prior work experience or educational qualifications have a higher likelihood of securing stable employment and reducing dependency on Zakat (Saad & Abdullah, 2014; Johari et al., 2022). However, the high unemployment rate among Zakat recipients, as reflected in this study, suggests that additional interventions—such as vocational training programs, business grants, and financial literacy initiatives—are necessary to promote sustainable economic empowerment.

In summary, while Zakat plays a vital role in addressing poverty, its effectiveness is not solely measured by the number of beneficiaries but by the proportion of recipients who achieve financial independence. Strengthening Zakat distribution strategies through data-driven decision-making, skill development programs, and targeted economic interventions is essential for ensuring long-term socio-economic progress among *asnaf fakir* and *miskin* communities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a descriptive research design to examine Zakat distribution practices among *asnaf fakir* and *asnaf miskin* in the Kuala Muda Yan district of Kedah. This approach is well-suited for capturing the demographic profile of Zakat recipients and analyzing the transition of individuals out of these categories. A comprehensive understanding of these dynamics is essential for identifying gaps in the current distribution system and recommending improvements.

The study utilizes data provided by Lembaga Zakat Negeri Kedah (LZNK), which estimates that 2,810 individuals in the district are classified as *fakir* and *miskin*, while 203 recipients have successfully transitioned out of these categories. The analysis focuses on assessing the characteristics of recipients, tracking transition trends, and evaluating factors that may contribute to or hinder economic mobility.

Statistical analysis is conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and percentages, are used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the recipients and illustrate transition patterns over time. Additionally, a comparative analysis is performed to examine the disparity between the total number of recipients and those who have transitioned out of Zakat dependency. The results are presented in tables and figures to enhance clarity and facilitate interpretation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The demographic analysis of Zakat recipients in Kuala Muda and Yan districts of Kedah provides crucial insights into their socio-economic characteristics, highlighting key factors influencing their dependency on Zakat. The findings underscore the complex nature of poverty and the necessity of targeted strategies to improve Zakat distribution effectiveness.

### Demographic Characteristics

The distribution of asnaf categories reveals that the majority of recipients fall under the miskin category (90%), while only 10% are classified as fakir. This suggests that while extreme poverty exists, a significant portion of recipients struggle to maintain a basic standard of living, reinforcing the need for financial assistance and economic empowerment programs.

### Gender and Age Distribution

Gender analysis shows a nearly equal distribution between male (50.1%) and female (49.9%) recipients. However, socio-cultural factors may influence women's access to economic opportunities, particularly in traditional households where women often bear a disproportionate share of caregiving and domestic responsibilities. These constraints may limit their participation in workforce training and self-sufficiency programs, reinforcing economic dependence.

The age distribution of recipients follows a normal pattern, with the majority falling between 30 and 79 years old. Notably, the highest percentage of recipients belongs to the 50–59 age group (24.6%), followed by the 60–69 group (20.9%) and the 40–49 group (20.7%). These findings highlight the challenges faced by middle-aged and elderly individuals who may struggle with employment instability or limited access to vocational opportunities. The presence of older recipients (70+ years) further underscores the need for targeted social protection programs that provide sustainable support beyond financial aid.

### Marital Status and Household Size

Marital status analysis reveals that 46% of recipients are married, while widows (35.7%) form the second-largest group. Single individuals (14%) and widowers (4.3%) make up the remainder. Married recipients often belong to larger family units, placing a heavier financial burden on household heads, especially when multiple dependents rely on a single income source (Indah, Junaidi & Etik, 2024). The significant proportion of widows among asnaf indicates a need for gender-sensitive Zakat programs that provide economic support and skill-building opportunities to female-headed households.

Table 1: Asnaf category and gender analysis

Characteristics	Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
Asnaf	Fakir	282	10
	Miskin	2528	90
Gender	Male	1408	50.1
	Female	1402	49.9
Age	< 20	2	0.1
	20 - 29	26	0.9
	30 - 39	234	8.3
	40 - 49	582	20.7
	50 - 59	692	24.6
	60 - 69	587	20.9

	70 - 79	475	16.9
	80 - 89	198	7
	> 90	14	0.5
Marital Status	Single	394	14
	Widow	1002	35.7
	Widower	121	4.3
	Married	1293	46
Employment status	Employed	864	30.7
	Unemployed	1946	69.3

### Employment Status and Dependency on Zakat

The employment status of recipients reflects a concerning trend, with 69.3% classified as unemployed and only 30.7% engaged in some form of employment. This high unemployment rate contributes significantly to Zakat dependency, as recipients lack stable income sources to meet their daily needs. Even among those employed, many work in informal or low-paying sectors, limiting their ability to transition out of poverty. This finding highlights the need for initiatives that focus on job creation, entrepreneurship training, and access to higher-income opportunities.

### Comparative Analysis: Transition Out of Asnaf Fakir and Miskin

A key objective of Zakat distribution is to facilitate economic upliftment, enabling recipients to transition out of the asnaf category. However, a comparative analysis of data from 2019 to 2023 suggests that the transition rate remains relatively low. As shown in Table 2, fewer than 35% of recipients successfully moved out of the asnaf category over a five-year period.

Table 2: Comparison of Zakat Recipients and Transitions Out from 2019 to 2023

Year	Distribution		Transition out	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
2019	253	9	29	14.3
2020	97	3.5	24	11.8
2021	723	25.7	39	19.2
2022	326	11.6	42	20.7
2023	1411	50.2	69	34
Total	2810		203	

### Trends in Zakat Distribution and Transition Rates

While the total number of recipients has increased significantly, the proportion of individuals exiting the asnaf fakir and asnaf miskin categories remains modest. The data reveals an inconsistent transition rate, ranging from 11% to 34% per year. The years 2021 until 2023 exhibit a stark contrast, where the number of new recipients surged while transition rates remained disproportionately low.

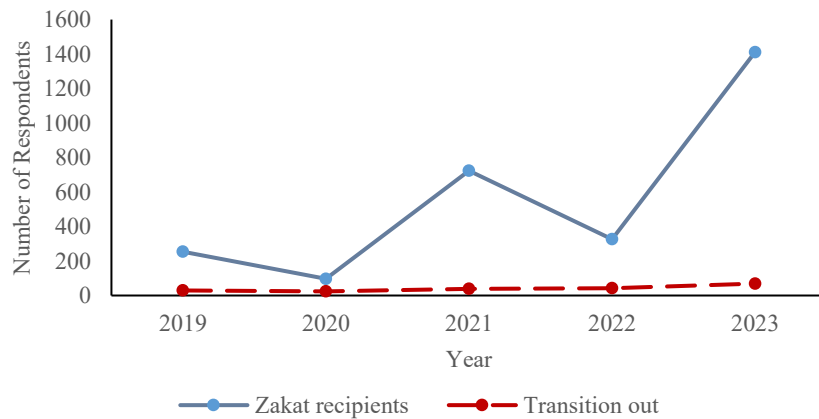


Figure 1: Trend of Zakat Distribution and Transition Out Asnaf for 2019 to 2023

This trend suggests that while Zakat funds provide essential financial relief, they may not be sufficiently transformative in helping recipients achieve long-term self-sufficiency. The disparity between the number of new recipients and those transitioning out of the asnaf category highlights systemic challenges in current distribution strategies.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights key areas for improving Zakat distribution among asnaf fakir (extremely poor) and asnaf miskin (poor) in Kedah, particularly in enhancing the effectiveness of aid delivery. One of the most pressing issues is the need for more precise targeting mechanisms to ensure assistance reaches those who need it most. Strengthening data collection through community surveys and participatory approaches can provide deeper insights into recipients' socio-economic conditions, allowing Zakat institutions to allocate resources more efficiently and equitably.

Beyond improving distribution, enhancing the monitoring and evaluation of Zakat outcomes is crucial for assessing its long-term impact. Current evaluation frameworks often focus on the quantity of aid disbursed rather than its effectiveness in improving recipients' lives. A more comprehensive approach should track the socio-economic progress of beneficiaries over time, incorporating qualitative measures such as financial stability and access to employment. Establishing continuous feedback mechanisms would enable Zakat institutions to refine their strategies based on real-world outcomes, ensuring greater accountability and effectiveness.

To maximize the impact of Zakat, a shift from short-term financial relief to sustainable economic empowerment is essential. Integrating vocational training, financial literacy programs, and entrepreneurship initiatives alongside direct financial aid can help recipients build long-term financial stability (Adiwijaya & Suprianto, 2020). Additionally, fostering strategic partnerships with government agencies, industry players, and NGOs can expand the reach and effectiveness of Zakat programs by leveraging local expertise and resources.

This study also provides valuable insights into the demographic characteristics of asnaf recipients. Many belong to large households and are often led by individuals with low education levels and unstable employment, making them particularly vulnerable to economic hardship. The findings reveal significant gaps in outreach and recipient identification, underscoring the need for a more structured and proactive approach. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration between Lembaga Zakat Negeri Kedah (LZNK), policymakers, businesses, and Zakat payers to accelerate the transition of asnaf fakir and asnaf miskin toward self-sufficiency.

By refining targeting mechanisms, strengthening monitoring and evaluation, and implementing sustainable empowerment strategies, Zakat institutions can significantly

enhance their role in poverty alleviation. These improvements will not only increase the effectiveness of Zakat distribution but also reinforce public trust in the system, ultimately fostering a more equitable and self-reliant society.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Lembaga Zakat Negeri Kedah (LZNK) and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah for their collaboration via Geran Penyelidikan Zakat, Sedekah Dan Wakaf (ZAWAF) 100-TNCPI/GOV 16/6/2 (045/2023) in securing the grant that has made this project possible. This partnership has provided invaluable support and resources, enabling us to advance our research and contribute to the academic community. We are particularly thankful to the funding bodies and the individuals involved from both institutions, whose dedication and commitment have been essential in fostering this successful collaboration.

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