

Analysis Of Maips Strategies In Zakat Management To Address The Impact Of Covid-19 In Perlis

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Abstract

The spread of the COVID-19 epidemic has led the World Health Organisation to declare COVID-19 as a pandemic. It has affected various sectors, especially the economic, social, educational and health sectors. This situation also affects the zakat institution when the poverty rate and those affected by health problems increase. It will certainly have a significant impact on the collection of zakat, which is declining, and the distribution of zakat is increasing. This requires zakat institutions to formulate new strategies in dealing with this adverse impact. Thus, the study is to examine the strategy of the Perlis Islamic Religious Council & Malay Customs (MAIPs) in the management of zakat to address the impact of COVID-19 in Perlis. Data were obtained through literature review and empirical data. A review of the literature related to the concept of zakat, reforms in zakat management, emergency zakat assistance and Perlis zakat institutions to understand how scholarly studies have discussed these topics. Furthermore, a virtual interview session was conducted with two MAIPs officers directly involved in zakat management in

Perlis. Interview sessions were conducted to obtain holistic information on MAIPs strategies in zakat management to address the impact of COVID-19 in Perlis. Then, some themes can be generated from the interview data before it is analysed based on the content analysis method. The study results show that MAIPs received 3,500 new asnaf recipients in 2021. The increase saw a total of 18,179 asnaf under MAIPs at this time compared to 14,679 asnaf existing recipients where it involved an increase of 24%. The findings also show that MAIPs has undertaken several initiatives in balancing between distribution and collection of zakat, such as collaborating with several external agencies to improve the effectiveness of zakat distribution, enhance digital capabilities in zakat distribution and collection as well as increase zakat payment awareness campaigns led by The President of MAIPs is the Raja Muda of Perlis DYT M Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra Ibni Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Jamalullail.

Keywords: Zakat, COVID-19, MAIPs, Poverty, Strategy.

Introduction

Since 2019, every country has faced critical challenges when attacked with the COVID-19 virus. The spread of the virus has prompted the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2020) to categorise the condition as a pandemic. When the government announced the Movement Control Order (MCO) to curb the spread of the COVID-19, it had a huge impact, especially on the economic sector. As a result, some employment sectors had to cease operations immediately to curb the spread of COVID-19 (Fabeil et al., 2020). The closure of businesses during the MCO resulted in many companies not covering the cost of expenses, including employee salaries, so they had to lay off employees. Apart from losing income or earning half a salary, they are also burdened with financial commitments in debt and increasing daily necessities expenses (Aziz et al., 2020).

Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has left a huge impact on the recipients of zakat and the B40 group. In fact, it also spread to the M40 and T20 groups, especially among traders and private employees who had to close their businesses and were laid off, especially involving the manufacturing, tourism, aviation and small industries (Othman & Ibrahim, 2020). As a result, according

to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, the national poverty rate increased to 8.4 percent from 5.6 percent in 2019 where the total household poverty in Malaysia has increased from 405,000 in 2019 to 640,000 in 2020 (Sinar Harian, 2021). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects an economic recession in 2020 to at least match the bad situation during the global financial crisis in 2009 (BNM, 2020). According to the World Bank Report, this effect of COVID-19 will cause nearly 35 million people to remain in poverty, and the number of people living in this extreme poverty will continue to increase to 922 million worldwide (Othman & Nor, 2021).

The worsening economic crisis has had a significant impact on the zakat institution, which has served as the social-economic sector of Muslims for a long time. Zakat institutions act as the party entrusted to collect zakat and distribute it to eligible asnaf (Ibrahim, 2015). However, as a result of the COVID-19, the collection of zakat will be affected, thus affecting the distribution of zakat to the needy more and more. In addition, the impact of COVID-19 has created a new group of asnaf, namely frontliners, small traders and daily wage workers, and the public, who are burdened with the MCO (Kamrizal & Nenengsih, 2021).

The huge impact on the economic sector will affect the amount of zakat collection. Zakat collection is expected to receive a negative impact from this pandemic. Among the types of zakat that will negatively impact that are income zakat, business zakat, stock zakat, and agricultural zakat (Shaharin et al., 2021). According to statistics released by the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economic), Perlis is among the states facing a significant increase in poverty (Sinar Harian, 2021).

In Perlis, since the outbreak of COVID-19 and the implementation of MCO, 46.6% of the 168,182 self-employed individuals lost their jobs during the MCO period (DOSM, 2020). This has caused them to lose their source of income and increase their burden to cover their daily lives. However, the State Government acknowledges that the cost to assist those affected is enormous. Therefore, the Perlis State Government has launched the Perlis State Disaster Fund as a joint venture in helping those affected by the implementation of MCO (DOSM, 2020). In addition, MAIPs has also recorded an addition of 3500 new asnaf aid recipients in 2021 following the impact of the COVID-19 (MAIPs, 2021). This

will definitely bring new challenges to the zakat management of MAIPs in the face of this adverse impact. Thus, the objective of this study is to examine the management strategy of collection and distribution of zakat by MAIPs in facing the challenges of COVID-19 in Perlis.

Reforms in zakat management

Zakat institutions in Malaysia have brought about various reforms to increase zakat collection. Among the efforts made is increasing the types of zakat property types, including income zakat, savings zakat, EPF zakat, takaful zakat, business zakat, and investment zakat, gold and silver zakat and agricultural zakat. This diversity has helped zakat institutions to increase zakat collection from time to time (Wahid & Ahmad, 2014).

Apart from that, the zakat collection is no longer through traditional methods. In fact, zakat institutions provide various types of modern channels to facilitate zakat payers. Among the zakat payment channels are through zakat counters at branches, mobile zakat counters (vans or lorries), salary deduction schemes, banks (counters, internet banking, ATMs) and post office counters. In addition, various alternative channels consist of virtual zakat payment methods (e-zakat pay), debit and credit cards, remittances, post-dated checks, Space Cooperatives and others (Razak, 2020).

Collection of zakat is not limited to assets in the form of staple food, livestock, crops or money alone, even digital assets in the form of bitcoin or digital currency are also allowed to be subject to zakat if sufficient conditions (Yusof et al., 2021). All these initiatives help in increasing the collection of zakat. In the study of Nasir et al. (2021), it was found that the nisab zakat rate paid more than the zakat obligation rate by zakat payers is 1.3 times assuming it contributes 23 per cent to income zakat collection in the Federal Territory.

In terms of zakat distribution, zakat institutions not only distribute zakat money on a one-off or subsistence basis to asnaf groups, but zakat institutions have carried out several initiatives such as building educational places, building businesses, providing training courses, providing scholarships and providing capital. It allows them to change their lives from asnaf to those who can contribute to the zakat fund due to a successful job or business (Razak, 2020).

Emergency zakat assistance

Apart from zakat assistance in the normal form that needs to be distributed to the designated asnaf groups, zakat assistance is also distributed for emergency assistance such as those involved in natural disasters. According to Faisal et al. (2016), flood victims can be included in the sixth group i.e. asnaf al-gharimin, because they are forced to be in debt in a case of no immorality and have not found a way to pay off their debts. They also need to be in debt for themselves and their families. This is because floods are disasters that cause property to be destroyed and need assistance. Thus, the Islamic scholars include the group as asnaf al-gharimin.

According to Faisal et al. (2016), zakat can be given to those affected by disasters, whether major floods, tornadoes, landslides, earthquakes and other events that cause their homes and crops to be destroyed. They can be categorised as al-gharimin who are entitled to receive zakat. However, Faisal et al. (2016) determined that the eligibility of a flood victim in an emergency is seen more accurately under the method of fiqh al-darurat tubihul mahzurat (harm allows restraint) and fiqh method which is al-darurat tuqaddar bi qadariha (the emergency is determined according to its rate).

Recently, zakat institutions have faced major challenges with the COVID-19 issue that has hit the country where it has affected various key sectors, especially the economic, educational, social and community sectors. Thus, it is recorded in several studies on the strategy of zakat institutions in dealing with the epidemic. To boost zakat collection, Hudaefi et al. (2021) suggested that zakat institutions increase digital zakat campaigns to increase collection in the COVID-19 phase, which has been successfully done by the National Zakat Agency of Indonesia (BAZNAS RI).

Similarly, online zakat payment is easier, faster and more reliable and can increase zakat collection in the COVID-19 phase (Bin-Nashwan, 2021). However, zakat organisations need to ensure that the zakat payment system is easy, as easy access is the most important factor influencing the desire to pay zakat online. Zakat institutions also need to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of payment systems, improve the quality of organisational and technical infrastructure where it can contribute to increasing the collection of zakat funds (Kasri et al., 2021).

Hudaefi et al. (2021) analysed machine learning through RStudio, which produced 16 topics related to three main topics: education, charity, and health services. These topics can help increase knowledge about the assistance of the National Agency of the Republic of Indonesia (BAZNAS RI) during the outbreak of COVID-19, it can help readers understand the administration of zakat during the outbreak from the website BAZNAS RI. This is supported in the study of Umar et al. (2021) that through a direct relationship between awareness and knowledge of Islamic social, financial instruments such as zakat can potentially make a positive contribution to increasing zakat collection during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the application of blockchain technology in zakat management can increase the Muslim community's trust in zakat institutions. This is because the technology can efficiently manage the collection and distribution of zakat collection services (Nor et al., 2021).

In terms of zakat distribution, many zakat institutions have opened the COVID-19 emergency fund for the affected groups. Among the affected groups are COVID-19 patients, job loss individuals, small traders and hawkers, and the existing asnaf group (Hambari et al., 2020; Suhaimi, 2020). The distribution of zakat funds to those affected by COVID-19 is in line with the maqasid al-Shariah (Kadir et al., 2020). Moreover, for the effectiveness of zakat distribution is facing the challenges of the COVID-19 epidemic, Ninglasari et al. (2021) suggested that zakat institutions increase the use of digital zakat to increase efficiency in the management of zakat collection and distribution. While Haider Syed et al. (2020) proposed a new model in zakat assistance by incorporating the concept of qard hasan to help small traders affected by COVID-19.

Zakat institutions in Perlis

Transformation in the administration of MAIPs yields positive results in managing MAIPs. In zakat management, MAIPs has appointed ahead to ensure the smooth administration of zakat. At the same time, MAIPs has created three important sections under this division: the distribution, collection, and Taman Desa Asnaf (TDA) sections (MAIPs, 2021a). TDA located in Batu Bertangkup, Perlis is one of the asnaf and agroeconomic settlement projects that MAIPs have carried out in collaboration with the Selangor Zakat Board (LZS) (MAIPs, 2021b). This 14-acre settlement has undertaken agro projects involving rock mellon

planting activities and fish farming and is complete with guest villas, homestays and so on (MAIPs, 2021b).

Apart from that, the management of zakat in Perlis is moving more efficiently by establishing two subsidiaries, namely Akademi Transformasi Asnaf MAIPs Sdn. Bhd. (ATAM Sdn. Bhd.) and Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis Sdn. Bhd. (KUIPs Sdn. Bhd.) (Chek et.al, 2020). ATAM Sdn. Bhd. was established to produce a balanced human capital of asnaf in terms of personality, education and skills, as well as improve and sustain the economic capacity of asnaf (MAIPs, 2021c). While establishing KUIPs Sdn. Bhd. also with the concept of education through institutional funding and bayt al-mal (Chek et al., 2020). This establishment has indirectly provided an opportunity for asnaf children to obtain the best education by furthering their studies at a higher level (KUIPs, 2021; Yusli et al., 2021).

There are six zakat types: income zakat, crop zakat, savings zakat, and digital money such as bitcoin, livestock zakat, business zakat, and gold & silver zakat. From the point of view of zakat payment, zakat payment is provided face to face either at the zakat institution counter, meet directly with the appointed zakat amil, through salary deduction scheme by the employer, payment through zakat counter at higher education institution and payment through post office. In addition, they can pay zakat virtually (MAIPs, 2021). MAIPs also represent Islamic banking through payment at bank counters, online services, payment via credit card, payment via check or bank draft or money order, payment via telephone banking, payment via short message service (SMS), and also payment via Auto Teller Machine (ATM) (MAIPs, 2021).

In the context of zakat distribution, MAIPs has also streamlined the distribution scheme to asnaf that have been identified. MAIPs has introduced various initiatives to help the asnaf who need compensation and assistance from MAIPs. In terms of contribution to the asnaf group, the president of MAIPs, Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra, always upholds the philosophy of giving "rods" and not just giving "fish" (Nazim, 2017). This philosophy indirectly triggers various efforts from MAIPs to improve the socio-economy of the asnaf in Perlis. Among them with the establishment of MAIPs subsidiary, ATAM Sdn. Bhd. by carrying the motto "First Receive Now Give" (MAIPs, 2021c). Through

ATAM Sdn. Bhd. various programs in the form of workshops and entrepreneurship training were conducted for the asnaf to change their standard of living for the better. Various programs have been conducted, such as MAIPs Entrepreneurship Program and CIMB Islamic-Taylor's 2019 (MAIPs, 2021f), Kampung Seberang Ramai Transformation Program, Kuala Perlis (Berita RTM. 2021), Entrepreneur Formation Training Course (LPU) (eWarta MARA, 2021).

In addition, MAIPs provides 14 schemes which include eight zakat asnaf, namely subsistence distribution scheme, monthly subsistence distribution scheme, medical distribution scheme, primary and secondary school distribution scheme, asnaf economic improvement program distribution scheme, electricity and water supply distribution scheme, scheme distribution of house repairs and new construction, micro distribution scheme for house repairs, distribution scheme for disasters such as floods, storms, landslides or fires, ibn sabil emergency distribution scheme, consolation distribution scheme for motivation to embrace Islam, IPT immediate education distribution scheme, scheme distribution of zakat on foreign scholarship education (Middle East) and distribution scheme of dakwah and community activities of MAIPs (MAIPs, 2021). MAIPs is also assisted by the Perlis State Mufti Department in the management of zakat in terms of fatwas and current legal issues. Thus, fatwas and legal guidelines related to zakat will be followed by MAIPs (Asni & Sulong, 2017; Asni, 2018).

Apart from that, the distribution of zakat in Perlis was also strengthened through the "MAIPs Peduli" program which was inspired by the President of MAIPs. This program was launched in 2013 with a total distribution of RM21.8 million and involving a total of 34,780 asnaf have been assisted (Nur Azlina, 2021). Through this program, the asnaf groups are regularly tracked through cycling activities. Now a total of 644 cycling series since it was introduced where it has been personally joined by Tuanku Yang Dipertua MAIPs (Nur Azlina, 2021).

Methodology

This study uses a cross-sectional narrative review conducted using qualitative data collection methods, specifically unstructured interview. In this study, interview methods were used to understand the subject matter of the current research

with those used in previous studies (Gunaratne and Senaratne, 2017).

Narrative research design is a design of inquiry from the field of humanities in which the researcher studies the experiences of individuals and asks them to provide stories about their experiences (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell (2014), the researcher often retold the information in a narrative chronology. In this study, stories from respondents about their experiences and knowledge were recorded and handwritten by the researchers to obtain holistic information regarding MAIPs strategies in zakat management to address the impact of COVID-19 in Perlis. In addition, the researchers also used unstructured interview techniques to obtain information from the respondents as it provided an opportunity for the respondents to present important new issues through open-ended questions (Wilson, 2014).

As this study explores the strategies of MAIPs in zakat management to address the impact of COVID-19 in Perlis, the researchers need to engage with appropriate interviewees through the purposive sampling method. Interviewees must have in-depth knowledge of the management of zakat in Perlis. In other words, it is a non-random selection, but the participants can provide in-depth and trusted information by their knowledge or experience (Etikan et al., 2016). In this regard, the researchers interviewed two officers from the zakat department of MAIPs. The interviews lasted for about 60 minutes. The interview sessions were conducted around October of 2021.

The interviews were conducted to determine the respondents' knowledge of the strategy of MAIPs in zakat management to address the impact of COVID-19 in Perlis. This is because the information on zakat management is in the custody of MAIPs. The interviews were recorded through audio recording methods and manually written in notebooks as additional storage if the audio recording is damaged or destroyed. After transcription, the collected information would be analysed based on the thematic method. This method enables the researchers to segment, categorise, summarise and reconstruct the data into important concepts (Lisa M. Given, 2008).

In fact, this method is a practical approach for analysing different perspectives among interviewees, highlighting similarities and

differences and generating unanticipated insights (Nowell et al., 2017). All methodologies applied through this study could support the researchers to obtain a holistic view of the strategy of MAIPs in zakat management to address the impact of COVID-19 in Perlis. Meanwhile, in terms of discussion, it will reveal the strategy of MAIPs in zakat management especially in terms of effectiveness in the collection and distribution of zakat in the COVID-19 phase. To safeguard the respondents' information, their names were encrypted as requested. They are known as IV1 and IV2.

To ensure the validity of the data, the interview is conducted with participants who are considered the most expert group in this topic. In this regard, the researchers must ensure that all interviewees have a Shari'ah background and are directly involved in managing zakat affairs. Thus, selecting respondents consisting of MAIPs zakat department officers are correct. In terms of the reliability of the data, all interviewees are questioned with the same set of questions. One-to-one interviews with standardised questions could improve the reliability of the study (Conway et al., 1995). All facts mentioned by interviewees to the researchers have been confirmed before leaving the session to avoid accidental errors. Before the interview, the questions were submitted a week earlier to prepare for the best answers.

The data also were subjected to triangulation. In research, triangulation helps address the limitations of a given methodology by complementing its weaknesses with the strength of other methods (Brewer and Hunter, 1989). This study used data source triangulation to ensure the data's accuracy, credibility, and validity. Therefore, to strengthen the data accuracy, credibility, and validity, the researchers asked the respondents to show the official documents related to the zakat affairs in MAIPs to be cross-referenced with the interview data. This is to mutually strengthen the data acquisition to achieve the study's objectives.

Result

To obtain holistic information on the distribution and collection strategies of zakat by MAIPs during the pandemic period, especially in Perlis, the researchers have interviewed two

respondents who know and experience in research problems where they are known as IV1 and IV2.

No.	Quotations	Themes
1	<p>Based on the results of interviews with respondents IV1 and IV2;</p> <p>“Over two years, MAIPs distributed RM12,880,317 for the entire 'MAIPs Initiative to address COVID-19' program for 2020 and 2021. A total of RM4,688,267 was distributed for 2020, while RM8,192,050 was distributed for 2021.”</p> <p>“Distribution to the asnaf group is 14,679 recipients in 2020 and 8,179 in 2021 which are credited directly into the account.”</p> <p>“MAIPs has taken an additional initiative, namely approving the reduction of rental rates for MAIPs premises during the period of full closure of the economic sector with financial implications of RM171,668.”</p> <p>“MAIPs allocates zakat to the frontliners through the State Health Office, State Education Office, Police, Army, Civil Defence Force and others involving state authorities. The allocation will be utilised according to the suitability of their respective roles. Among the other assistance schemes channelled to frontliners is kindergarten fee assistance.”</p> <p>“MAIPs works with NGOs, amil zakat, qaryah chairman, mosque chairman. For example, in education, MAIPs channelled RM11,680,080 to Islamic educational institutions in Perlis in 2021. 34 Islamic Education Institutions at the primary, secondary levels, Maahad tahfiz and Higher Education throughout Perlis are involved. Through collaboration with NGOs, MAIPs delegates to several NGOs such as Putra Perlis to find and identify the affected groups and distribute food and basic necessities.”</p> <p>"MAIPs also appointed muraqib amil consisting of 104 teachers from schools around Perlis to channel assistance to school students in need so that they do not drop out."</p>	<p>Zakat distribution strategy in addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic by MAIPs.</p>

	<p>“Distribution of emergency aid donations through 103 mosques throughout the state of Perlis. Facilitate the bureaucracy of zakat assistance, i.e. the affected individuals only need to attend the mosque or meet with the amil or Mosque Committee Members to receive assistance without having to apply and be credited directly into the account. Mosques are used as centres for the local community to complain about various problems.”</p> <p>“MAIPs is always looking for ways to facilitate assistance to those in need by opening counters to submit zakat assistance forms for 24 hours. Not only physical, form submission via virtual is also open all the time. Apart from that, MAIPs also constantly monitor MAIPs official FB page if there are parties who ask for help through the medium.”</p> <p>“For assistance to existing asnaf, assistance continues to be given based on the records of the existing asnaf portal. It does not require them to renew or anything like that during this pandemic period.”</p>	
	<p>Based on the results of interviews with respondents IV1 and IV2;</p> <p>“Each distribution of zakat allocation will be shared in major electronic media and on the official website of MAIPs, it is to attract the attention of the Muslim community to continue to contribute for the welfare of Muslims and increase transparency in the management of zakat.”</p> <p>“Increase zakat payment campaigns through physical such as in Friday sermons, talks by religious teachers in mosques and official functions organised by MAIPs.”</p> <p>“MAIPs also cooperates with domestic agencies, whether government or private, as a representative for collecting zakat, such as through deductions from staff salaries in their respective agencies.”</p> <p>“Payment of zakat through internet banking is also simplified, i.e., can pay zakat through Bank Islam, Maybank</p>	<p>Strategies of zakat collection during the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic by MAIPs.</p>

	<p>and CIMB Bank. Payment can also be made via credit card, check or bank draft or money order, telephone banking, short message service (SMS), and Auto Teller Machine (ATM)."</p> <p>"Increase the campaign virtually through electronic media and MAIPs official virtual website to attract the Muslim community to also contribute to the zakat institution. It is led by the Yang DiPertua MAIPs, Raja Muda of Perlis DYTU Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra Ibni Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Jamalullail. Yang DiPertua MAIPs and also the MAIPs always express appreciation and praise to zakat contributors as 'Adiwira' is not kicked. Yang DiPertua MAIPs also said that zakat contributors are the backbone and strength of the council in implementing all collection trusts and distribution of zakat."</p>	
	<p>Based on the results of interviews with respondents IV1 and IV2;</p> <p>"MAIPs has identified 3,500 recipients of new asnaf assistance in 2021. They receive regular subsistence assistance and monthly subsistence assistance from MAIPs. The increase saw 18,179 asnaf under MAIPs currently compared to 14,679 asnaf of aid recipients recorded through the MAIPs Integrated Information Management System (SPMB) in the previous year."</p> <p>"It is difficult for MAIPs to identify the affected groups to go down to the field. This is because, the increasing number of infections in Perlis and the MCO implemented bring risks to the staff. However, MAIPs always try to track the asnaf and affected parties through various channels and methods other than complying with SOPs if going to places affected by COVID-19 infection. MAIPs will work with the health authorities and the state authorities when they want to make a zakat distribution handover ceremony so that the continuation of zakat handover occurs according to the SOPs that have been outlined."</p>	<p>MAIPs faces several challenges due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>

Discussion

Based on the results of the study shows that the initiatives implemented by the MAIPs are very appropriate. This is because, apart from assistance to asnaf affected by COVID-19, there are other parties also affected, especially the economic and health sectors. The impact of COVID-19 has had a detrimental effect on traders (Fabeil et al., 2020). This is due to the implementation of MCO by the government to curb the spread of COVID-19, causing fewer people to make purchases. Thus, the initiative to reduce the rental of business premises greatly helps reduce the affected traders' burden. In addition, the allocation to the health sector through the State Health Department is very appropriate. This is because it can reduce the burden of the federal government by managing the increasing number of COVID-19 patients all the time (Shakeel et al., 2020). The distribution of zakat funds to those affected by COVID-19 is in line with maqasid al-Shariah (Kadir et al., 2020; Ishak & Asni, 2020; Asni et al., 2021).

The cooperation of MAIPs with various parties and facilitating the bureaucracy of zakat assistance during COVID-19 can increase the effectiveness of zakat distribution. This is because the increase in the number of people affected due to the spread of COVID-19 makes it difficult for zakat institutions to identify and assist the affected parties (Kamrizal & Nenengsih, 2021). However, cooperation with various authoritative parties such as state government departments facilitates assistance to reach the affected parties throughout Perlis at various levels of society such as health problems will be assisted by the State Health Department. In addition, the facilities in the zakat assistance bureaucracy can help the affected parties to obtain zakat assistance more quickly (Wahid & Ahmad, 2014). This is because the increase in the number of people affected by COVID-19 makes it difficult for MAIPs to process applications according to normal methods. Thus, the initiative is very helpful in reducing the burden of the affected groups.

In addition, the initiative of MAIPs in collaboration with non-governmental welfare agencies (NGOs), amil zakat, mosque chairmen, state educational institutions and muraqib amil through the appointment of 103 school teachers around Perlis is significant. This is because, cooperation through these parties can save time for assistance to reach those in need. In addition, the parties also have data of local communities in need of

assistance. The initiative is also in line with the current pandemic situation where movement activities are very limited. This is supported by the study of Abu Bakar et al. (2018) and Paizin (2014) that close cooperation by zakat bodies with other agencies can bring significant impact and benefits to the collection and distribution of zakat.

Based on the study's findings on the strategy of MAIPs in balancing zakat income in the COVID-19 pandemic season, various efforts have been made by MAIPs. Campaigns through electronic and physical media are always given priority. The study findings also show that the president of MAIPs, the Raja Muda of Perlis DYTU Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra Ibni Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Jamalullail also went to the field in conducting an awareness campaign for the Muslim community to make zakat payments.

The efforts made by the MAIPs are in line with the study of Umar et al. (2021) that through a direct relationship between awareness and knowledge of Islamic social, financial instruments such as zakat, has the potential to make a positive contribution to increasing zakat collection during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Yusoff et al. (2018), zakat campaigns through electronic media are the main source of information for young people to pay income zakat.

However, the researchers would like to suggest that MAIPs add a new strategy in balancing zakat income by including the element of qard hasan in the distribution of zakat, especially to suitable asnaf such as small traders who cannot afford to obtain financing in banks. Thus, they are given a loan from zakat money to be used as additional capital to continue and grow their business, then when they have developed, they repay the debt in instalments that are not burdensome. This smart collaboration can balance the income and distribution of zakat by MAIPs in the long run. This suggestion is supported by the study of Haider Syed et al. (2020) who also proposed a new model in zakat assistance by incorporating the concept of qard hasan to help small traders affected by COVID-19.

MAIPs in the COVID-19 pandemic, the MAIPs has identified 3,500 new recipients of asnaf assistance in 2021 following the COVID-19 pandemic. The group receives regular subsistence assistance and monthly subsistence assistance from MAIPs. The increase

saw a total of 18,179 asnaf under MAIPs monitoring compared to 14,679 asnaf of aid recipients recorded through the MAIPs Integrated Information Management System (SPMB) in the previous year. The increase in asnaf was significant when the government announced the Movement Control Order (MCO) to curb the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic, it had a huge impact, especially on the economic sector. As a result, some employment sectors had to cease operations immediately to curb the spread of COVID-19 (Fabeil et al., 2020; Asni, 2021).

Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has left a huge impact not only on the asnaf zakat group, but also on the B40 group. In fact, it also spread to the M40 and T20 groups, especially among traders and private employees who had to close their businesses and were laid off, especially involving the manufacturing, tourism, aviation and small industries (Othman & Ibrahim, 2020). As a result, according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, the national poverty rate increased to 8.4 percent from 5.6 percent in 2019 where the total household poverty in Malaysia has increased from 405,000 in 2019 to 640,000 in 2020 (Sinar Harian, 2021).

The study findings also show that MAIPs cooperates with the health authorities and state authorities when they want to make the zakat distribution handover ceremony so that the continuity of zakat handover takes place in compliance with the SOPs have been outlined. Although going down the field during the pandemic season is challenging, the MAIPs continue their efforts to channel aid by complying with the SOPs that have been outlined.

Based on the study's overall results, the MAIPs has carried out efforts to balance the collection and distribution of zakat through various initiatives. In addition, it was found that the MAIPs carried out various methods to increase the effectiveness in the distribution of zakat despite facing challenges in the COVID-19 pandemic season, such as limitations in movement and adherence to strict SOPs. Thus, the strategy carried out by the MAIPs can greatly impact the Muslim community, where zakat assistance will always be continued, especially to the growing number of asnaf. In addition, this study also greatly impacts other state zakat institutions to take advantage of the strategies that have been carried out. This is because, every state in Malaysia also faces the same challenges as in Perlis.

Conclusion

The spread of the COVID-19 epidemic has led the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare COVID-19 as a pandemic. It has affected various sectors, especially the economic, social, educational and health sectors without borders. This situation also affects the zakat institution when the poverty rate and those affected by health problems are increasing, so it will certainly have a significant impact on the collection of zakat which is declining and the distribution of zakat is increasing. This requires zakat institutions to formulate new strategies in dealing with this adverse impact. Thus, this study examines the strategies of MAIPs in zakat management to address the impact of COVID-19 in Perlis.

The study results show that MAIPs has received a total of 3,500 new asnaf recipients in 2021. The increase saw a total of 18,179 asnaf under MAIPs at this time compared to 14,679 asnaf existing recipients. The findings also show that MAIPs has undertaken several initiatives in balancing between distribution and collection of zakat such as collaborating with several external agencies to improve the effectiveness of zakat distribution, increase digital capabilities in zakat distribution and collection as well as increase awareness campaigns on zakat payment led by The President of MAIPs is the Raja Muda of Perlis DYTM Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra Ibni Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Jamalullail.

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