



Good governance of zakat: Constitutional legitimacy of BAZNAS from the perspective of islamic economics

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Abstract

The growing significance of Islamic social finance has intensified scholarly attention toward zakat institutions as strategic instruments for socio-economic development, particularly in relation to governance quality and institutional legitimacy. This study aims to systematically examine the relationship between constitutional legitimacy and good governance within the context of zakat management, with a specific focus on the National Board of Zakat (BAZNAS) from an Islamic economics perspective. Employing a qualitative design through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), this study follows the PRISMA framework to identify, screen, and analyze 50 peer-reviewed articles indexed in Scopus published between 2015 and 2025. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis supported by structured coding to identify patterns in governance dimensions, legitimacy constructs, and theoretical frameworks. The findings reveal that good governance, characterized by transparency, accountability, and effectiveness, serves as the central determinant of institutional credibility and zakat compliance. While constitutional legitimacy provides a formal legal foundation, it does not automatically ensure public trust; instead, legitimacy is dynamically constructed through governance performance. The study further highlights the mediating role of trust in linking governance practices to compliance behavior, as well as the emerging significance of digital transformation and SDG alignment in strengthening institutional impact. Theoretically, this study integrates Institutional Theory with Maqasid al-Shariah to propose a more comprehensive framework for zakat governance. In conclusion, the effectiveness and sustainability of zakat institutions depend on the continuous alignment between legal authority, governance quality, and ethical principles, positioning zakat as both a religious obligation and a strategic tool for sustainable socio-economic development.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of the global Islamic finance industry has brought renewed attention to the role of Islamic social finance instruments, particularly zakat, as mechanisms for promoting socio-economic justice and poverty alleviation. As one of the fundamental pillars of Islam, zakat represents not only a religious obligation but also a structured redistribution system with significant economic potential (Hanif & Ayub, 2022). In many Muslim-majority countries, zakat institutions are expected to function as formal intermediaries that collect, manage, and distribute funds efficiently and equitably. However, despite its normative importance, the practical realization of zakat's socio-economic impact remains uneven across different institutional contexts (Malik, 2016; Mat Daud & Wahid, 2025). This discrepancy highlights the growing need to critically examine how governance structures influence the effectiveness of zakat institutions. Consequently, the discourse on zakat governance has evolved from purely theological considerations toward institutional and managerial

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perspectives. Within this shift, the integration of good governance principles has become central to enhancing institutional performance and public confidence.

Empirical evidence across various contexts indicates that zakat institutions often face persistent challenges related to transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency. In Indonesia, for instance, despite the existence of formal regulatory frameworks, public trust in zakat institutions fluctuates due to concerns regarding fund management and reporting practices (Megawati & Zulkifli, 2025; Mukhlisin et al., 2024; Qutaiba et al., 2024). Similar patterns are observed in other countries such as Malaysia and Nigeria, where governance weaknesses are frequently linked to lower levels of compliance and participation among potential donors (Antlöv et al., 2006; Ebrahim, 2003). These issues are not merely administrative but have broader implications for the credibility and sustainability of zakat systems. When stakeholders perceive governance failures, the willingness to fulfill zakat obligations through formal institutions declines, thereby limiting the overall socio-economic impact of zakat distribution. Furthermore, the increasing complexity of modern financial systems demands that zakat institutions adopt more sophisticated governance mechanisms to remain relevant. This situation underscores the importance of strengthening governance frameworks as a means of addressing both institutional inefficiencies and public trust deficits.

The urgency of addressing governance challenges in zakat institutions becomes even more pronounced in the context of global development agendas. Zakat has been increasingly recognized as a potential instrument for supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in areas such as poverty reduction, education, and social welfare (Aziz et al., 2020; Nurhasanah, 2023; Syamsuri et al., 2022). However, the ability of zakat institutions to contribute meaningfully to these objectives depends heavily on their governance quality. Weak governance structures can hinder effective resource allocation and reduce the measurable impact of zakat programs. Conversely, robust governance practices can enhance institutional credibility, attract greater participation, and improve the efficiency of fund distribution (David & Kochhar, 1996; Zheng, 2011). In this regard, governance is not merely a technical requirement but a strategic determinant of zakat's developmental role. Therefore, a deeper understanding of governance dynamics is essential for positioning zakat as a credible and impactful component of Islamic social finance.

Within the Indonesian context, the National Board of Zakat (BAZNAS) represents a unique institutional model that operates at the intersection of state authority and religious obligation. Established under a constitutional mandate, BAZNAS holds a formal legal status that distinguishes it from many other zakat institutions globally (Mustafida et al., 2020; Zami & Nurhaida, 2025) (Huda et al., 2019). This dual positioning provides both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, constitutional legitimacy enables standardization, scalability, and integration with national development policies (Balarabe, 2025; Haggart & Keller, 2021; Öztürk, 2024). On the other hand, it raises critical questions regarding the relationship between formal authority and public trust. The assumption that legal legitimacy automatically translates into social legitimacy is increasingly contested in contemporary scholarship. Instead, there is growing recognition that institutional legitimacy must be continuously reinforced through demonstrable performance and accountability. This tension between formal legitimacy and operational credibility forms a crucial area of inquiry in zakat governance studies.

Existing literature on zakat governance has produced a substantial body of knowledge that examines various dimensions, including compliance behavior, institutional performance, and governance mechanisms. Studies grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) have explored the psychological determinants of zakat compliance, highlighting the roles of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Qamruzzaman et al., 2025; Rusanti & Anwar, 2025). Meanwhile, research employing Stakeholder Theory has emphasized the importance of accountability to multiple stakeholders, including donors, beneficiaries, and regulatory authorities (Awa et al., 2024; Hansen, 2023; Tufani, 2024). In addition, the concept of Maqasid al-Shariah has been widely used as a normative framework to ensure that zakat management aligns with broader ethical and social objectives (Al Haq, 2019; Farisi, 2023). More recent studies have also begun to incorporate technological perspectives, examining how digitalization can enhance transparency and

efficiency in zakat management (Abdul-Rahman et al., 2023; Rahman & Mustapha, 2025). Collectively, these studies demonstrate the multidimensional nature of zakat governance.

Despite these advancements, several limitations remain evident in the existing literature. First, many studies tend to focus on isolated aspects of zakat governance, such as compliance behavior or financial performance, without integrating these dimensions into a comprehensive analytical framework (Baehaqi et al., 2025; Bin-Nashwan et al., 2020; Sawmar & Mohammed, 2021). Second, there is a notable lack of systematic literature reviews that critically synthesize the relationship between constitutional legitimacy and good governance within the context of Islamic economics. Third, the majority of empirical studies are geographically concentrated in Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, which limits the generalizability of findings to other contexts (Jin & Kim, 2021; Lee et al., 2025; Nieuwenhuis, 2022). Furthermore, the interaction between top-down legitimacy derived from state authority and bottom-up legitimacy derived from public trust remains underexplored. This gap is particularly significant given the unique institutional configuration of BAZNAS. Without a holistic understanding of these dynamics, it is difficult to develop effective governance models that are both contextually relevant and theoretically robust.

In addition to these gaps, the theoretical integration within zakat governance research remains relatively fragmented. While TPB and Stakeholder Theory provide valuable insights into individual behavior and institutional accountability, they are less effective in explaining macro-level institutional dynamics. Similarly, the application of Maqasid al-Shariah often remains conceptual rather than operational, with limited discussion on how its principles can be translated into concrete governance practices. Recent calls in the literature suggest the need for incorporating broader theoretical perspectives, such as Institutional Theory, to better understand how organizations respond to regulatory pressures, societal expectations, and technological changes (Chu et al., 2018; Galleli & Amaral, 2026; Risi et al., 2023; Schiavi et al., 2024). Moreover, emerging themes such as digital transformation and SDG alignment have not yet been fully integrated into existing governance frameworks. These limitations highlight the necessity of developing a more comprehensive and integrative approach to zakat governance research.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to provide a systematic and critical synthesis of the literature on zakat governance, with a particular focus on the constitutional legitimacy of BAZNAS from an Islamic economics perspective. Specifically, the study seeks to (1) map the development and trends of zakat governance research, including its methodological and geographical dimensions; (2) analyze how the literature conceptualizes the relationship between constitutional legitimacy and good governance; and (3) propose an integrative theoretical framework that incorporates Institutional Theory and a more operationalized understanding of Maqasid al-Shariah. Theoretically, this study contributes by reframing constitutional legitimacy as a dynamic construct that must be continuously validated through governance performance. Practically, the findings offer insights for policymakers and zakat institutions to enhance transparency, accountability, and public trust. By addressing existing gaps and proposing new conceptual pathways, this study aims to advance the discourse on zakat governance and strengthen its role in achieving sustainable socio-economic development.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to comprehensively examine the governance of zakat, with a particular focus on the constitutional legitimacy of the National Board of Zakat (BAZNAS) from an Islamic economics perspective. The SLR design was selected because it allows for a structured, transparent, and replicable synthesis of existing scholarly work, enabling the identification of patterns, theoretical developments, and research gaps within a specific field (Siddaway et al., 2019). In contrast to traditional narrative reviews, the SLR approach ensures methodological rigor through predefined protocols and systematic procedures. This study adopts the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to guide the identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of relevant literature (Moher et al., 2010). The use of PRISMA enhances the reliability and transparency of the review process while minimizing selection bias. The PRISMA protocol, which visually maps the flow of information through the stages of the review, is illustrated

in Figure 1. This process unfolds in four distinct phases: Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion.

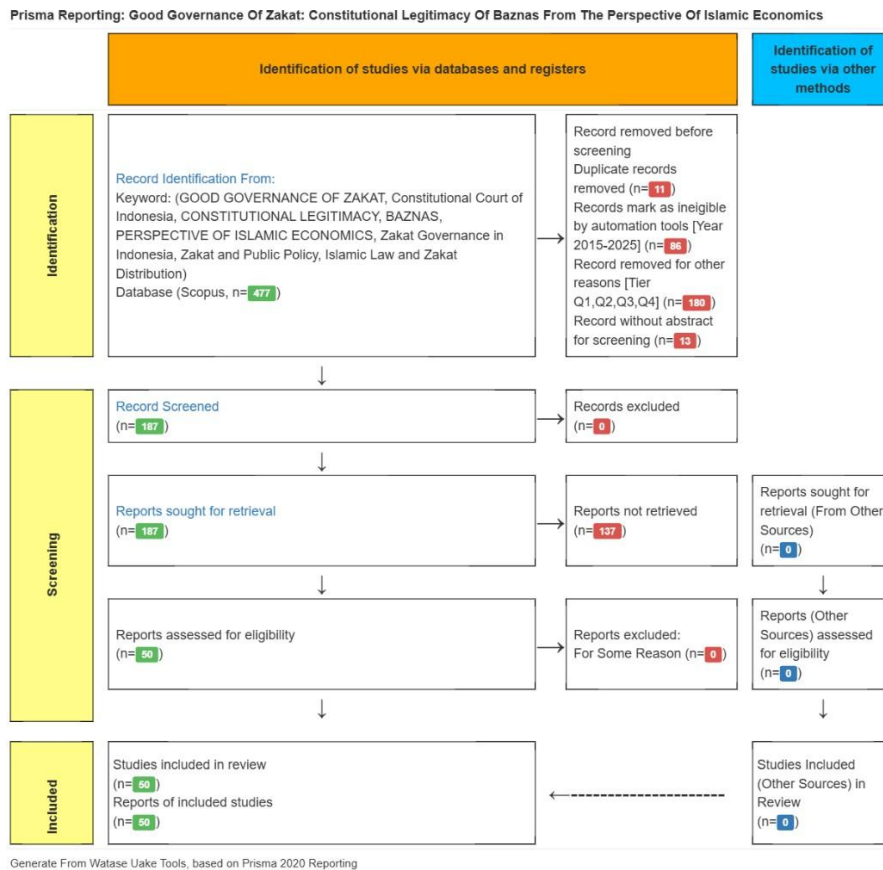


Figure 1. Prisma Flowchart

The research was conducted within the context of global zakat governance literature, with a particular emphasis on studies related to Indonesia and comparable institutional settings. The data collection process was carried out between January and March 2026, during which relevant academic publications were systematically retrieved and analyzed. The temporal scope of the literature was limited to publications from 2015 to 2025 in order to capture contemporary developments in zakat governance while ensuring the relevance of the findings to current institutional practices. This timeframe was chosen to reflect the rapid evolution of Islamic social finance, particularly in relation to governance reforms, digital transformation, and alignment with global development frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The population of this study consists of peer-reviewed academic articles on zakat governance indexed in reputable international databases. The sampling process followed a purposive sampling technique, focusing on studies that explicitly address governance, legitimacy, institutional performance, or related themes within zakat institutions. The primary data source was the Scopus database, selected due to its comprehensive coverage of high-quality scholarly publications. The initial search yielded 477 articles using a combination of keywords, including “zakat governance,” “good governance,” “constitutional legitimacy,” “BAZNAS,” and “Islamic economics.” Inclusion criteria were defined as follows: (1) articles published in peer-reviewed journals indexed in Scopus (Q1–Q4), (2) studies written in English, (3) publications within the specified timeframe, and (4) articles that provide substantive discussion on zakat governance or related constructs. Exclusion criteria included duplicate records, conference abstracts without full texts, and studies lacking direct relevance to the research focus. After applying these criteria and conducting full-text screening, a final sample of 50 articles was selected for analysis.

The primary “instrument” in this study is a structured data extraction and coding protocol designed to systematically capture relevant information from each selected article. This protocol includes key indicators such as publication year, geographical focus, research methodology,

theoretical framework, governance dimensions (e.g., transparency, accountability), and conceptualization of legitimacy. The development of the coding framework was informed by prior SLR studies in Islamic finance and governance research (Alimusa et al., 2025; Aziz et al., 2025). In addition, qualitative analysis software and supporting tools, including the WataSe Uake System, were utilized to facilitate the organization, categorization, and visualization of emerging themes across the dataset. These tools enabled a more systematic and consistent analysis of complex qualitative data.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data extraction process, several strategies were employed. Content validity was established by aligning the coding categories with established theoretical frameworks, including good governance principles, Stakeholder Theory, and Maqasid al-Shariah. The coding protocol was reviewed through expert judgment by researchers with expertise in Islamic economics and research methodology to ensure conceptual clarity and relevance. Reliability was enhanced through iterative coding and cross-checking procedures, where selected articles were re-evaluated to ensure consistency in categorization. Although statistical reliability measures such as Cronbach's alpha are not directly applicable in qualitative SLR studies, methodological rigor was maintained through transparency, systematic procedures, and adherence to established review protocols (Siddaway et al., 2019).

The data collection procedure followed the four stages outlined in the PRISMA framework. In the identification stage, relevant articles were retrieved from the Scopus database using predefined keywords and Boolean search operators. In the screening stage, titles and abstracts were reviewed to assess their relevance to the research objectives. Articles that met the initial criteria were then subjected to full-text evaluation in the eligibility stage, where their methodological quality and conceptual relevance were examined in detail. Finally, in the inclusion stage, only those articles that fully satisfied the inclusion criteria were retained for qualitative synthesis. All stages of the process were documented systematically to ensure transparency and replicability.

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative thematic analysis approach, which allows for the identification, organization, and interpretation of patterns within the literature. The analysis began with open coding, where key concepts and recurring ideas were identified from the extracted data. These initial codes were then grouped into broader categories through axial coding, followed by the development of overarching themes that reflect the intellectual structure of zakat governance research. Thematic analysis was complemented by descriptive analysis to map publication trends, geographical distribution, and methodological approaches. The integration of these analytical techniques enabled a comprehensive understanding of both the content and structure of the literature. The findings were subsequently interpreted in light of relevant theoretical frameworks, including Institutional Theory, to provide deeper insights into the dynamics of legitimacy and governance.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. As this study relies exclusively on secondary data from publicly available academic publications, it does not involve direct interaction with human participants. Nevertheless, ethical principles such as academic integrity, proper citation, and avoidance of plagiarism were strictly upheld. All sources were appropriately acknowledged using APA citation standards, and the analysis was conducted objectively without manipulation or selective reporting of findings. In addition, the transparency of the methodological process ensures that the study can be critically evaluated and replicated by other researchers. By adhering to these ethical standards, the study maintains both scholarly credibility and methodological integrity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Descriptive Overview of the Reviewed Literature

The academic landscape surrounding zakat governance has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past decade (2015-2025), evolving from niche theological discussions to a vibrant, interdisciplinary field within Islamic economics. Our analysis of 46 pivotal studies reveals a narrative of growth and increasing sophistication. The early years were dominated by exploratory, qualitative inquiries, such as Müller, (2016) seminal work on zakat administration in Malaysia, which

laid the groundwork by unpacking the complex socio-cultural contexts of zakat management. However, the field has since exploded in both scope and methodological rigor.

A striking feature of this literature is its distinct geographical footprint. Indonesia emerges as the undisputed epicenter of empirical research, accounting for 17 of the 46 studies analyzed, with Malaysia a significant secondary hub. This concentration is hardly coincidental; it reflects the dynamic, institutionalized nature of zakat management in these countries, where bodies like BAZNAS provide a fertile ground for academic scrutiny. While contributions from Pakistan, Nigeria, and the Middle East enrich the discourse, the relative scarcity of studies from non-Muslim majority nations, barring a few exceptions like Kato (2022), points to a significant geographical gap in the literature. Interestingly, the field's credibility is underscored by its publication venues. A substantial majority of these studies find homes in high-impact Q1 and Q2 journals, such as the *International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management and Sustainability*, signaling its acceptance into the mainstream of scholarly conversation on finance and development.

Analytical Lenses: Deconstructing the Intellectual Architecture

To make sense of this diverse body of work, we have categorized it along three interconnected analytical dimensions, which together form the intellectual architecture of contemporary zakat governance research.

1. Thematic Structure of Zakat Governance Research

Table 2. Thematic Structure of Zakat Governance Research

Theme Category	Core/Peripheral Position	Key Focus / Description
Good Governance	Core	Serves as the overarching paradigm emphasizing transparency and accountability as the foundation of institutional credibility.
Zakat Management	Core	Centers on the efficiency of zakat collection and the critical challenge of achieving equitable distribution.
Constitutional Legitimacy	Core	Examines constitutional legitimacy within the Indonesian context, focusing on how BAZNAS, as a state-sanctioned authority, interfaces with religious mandates.
Digital Transformation	Peripheral (Emerging)	Highlights the role of digitalization in enhancing zakat management and adapting to technological advancements.
Zakat and SDGs Alignment	Peripheral (Emerging)	Explores the integration of zakat with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework to strengthen its socio-economic impact.

Thematically, the literature is structured around a core-periphery model. At its heart lies the robust, interconnected triad of Good Governance, Zakat Management, and Constitutional Legitimacy. Good governance acts as the overarching paradigm, with its principles of transparency and accountability repeatedly identified as the bedrock of institutional credibility (Abdul Rahim et al., 2024). This is intrinsically linked to the operational mechanics of Zakat Management, where the focus shifts to the efficiency of collection and the profound challenge of ensuring equitable distribution (Sawmar & Mohammed, 2021). Notably, the theme of Constitutional Legitimacy, particularly in the Indonesian context, adds a unique layer to the discourse, examining how state-sanctioned authority, as embodied by BAZNAS, interfaces with religious mandate (Huda et al., 2019). On the periphery, yet growing in prominence, are forward-looking themes like Digital Transformation and the alignment of zakat with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seek to position zakat within modern technological and global development frameworks (Aziz et al., 2025; Syed Yusuf et al., 2022).

2. Methodological Evolution in Zakat Research



Figure 2. Method Classification

Methodologically, the field exhibits a clear trajectory from descriptive analysis towards empirical and analytical sophistication. The early reliance on qualitative case studies and conceptual reviews was crucial for building foundational understanding. However, the last five years have witnessed a pronounced "quantitative shift," with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) emerging as the tool of choice for researchers like Wahyuni-TD et al. (2021) and Farouk et al. (2018) to untangle the complex causal relationships between governance, trust, and compliance. This is not to say qualitative approaches have been supplanted; rather, they have matured, often forming part of mixed-methods designs that provide rich contextual depth to statistical findings. The recent adoption of bibliometrics and multilevel modeling further indicates a field pushing its own methodological boundaries (Alimusa et al., 2025; Aziz et al., 2025).

3. Theoretical Foundations

Table 3. Theoretical Foundations

Theoretical Framework	Conceptual Focus	Theoretical Contribution / Description
Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)	Behavioral and psychological dimension	Explains the psychological determinants of zakat compliance by emphasizing how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape individuals' intentions to pay zakat.
Stakeholder Theory	Institutional accountability	Provides an analytical lens for understanding the multi-layered accountability of zakat institutions toward diverse stakeholders, including the state, donors, and beneficiaries.
Maqasid al-Sharia	Normative and ethical foundation	Serves as the moral compass of zakat governance research, ensuring that institutional and technical discussions are grounded in the higher objectives of Islamic law—justice, welfare, and human dignity.

Theoretically, research is anchored in a productive dialogue between established social science theories and normative Islamic frameworks. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been extensively and effectively deployed to decode the psychological drivers of zakat compliance, revealing how attitudes, social norms, and perceived control shape payment intentions (Saad et al., 2020). Conversely, Stakeholder Theory provides a robust lens for analyzing the multifaceted accountability of zakat institutions (Wahyuni-TD et al., 2021). Perhaps most significantly, the philosophy of Maqasid al-Sharia serves as the field's moral compass, constantly redirecting inquiry towards the ultimate objectives of Islamic law justice, welfare, and human dignity and ensuring that technical discussions of governance remain grounded in ethical purpose (Mansour et al., 2017).

4. Geographical Distribution of Research

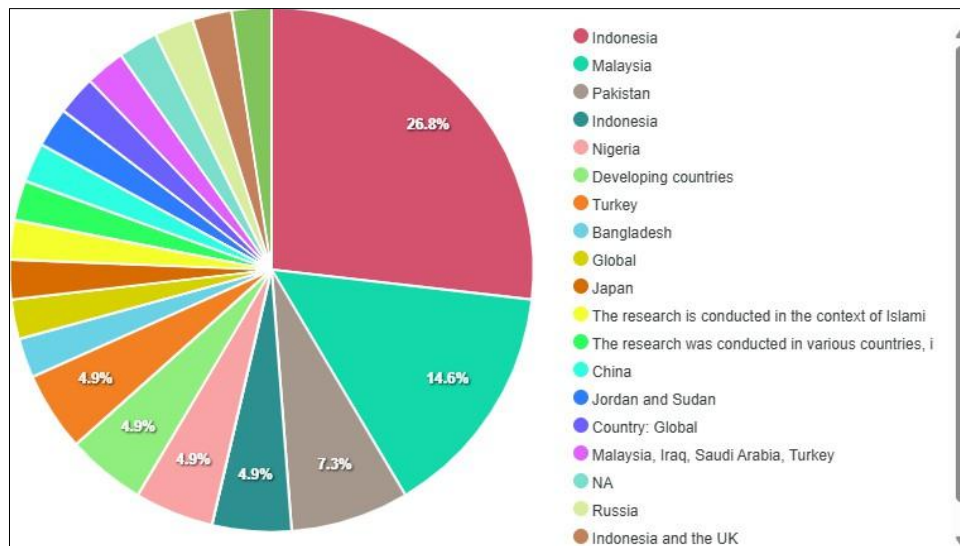


Figure 3. Geographical Distribution of Research

The geographical mapping of zakat governance research demonstrates a strong regional concentration, with Indonesia emerging as the dominant locus, representing 26.8% of the total studies. This reflects the country's active institutionalization of zakat through state bodies such as BAZNAS and the widespread scholarly interest in Islamic social finance within the Indonesian context. Malaysia follows with 14.6%, indicating its parallel commitment to formalized zakat management and the integration of zakat into national Islamic economic policy. Pakistan contributes 7.3%, highlighting its long-standing experience with state-mandated zakat systems.

Several other regions including Nigeria, Turkey, Bangladesh, Japan, Jordan and Sudan, and multi-country comparative studies each account for approximately 4.9% of the literature. These dispersed contributions suggest a growing internationalization of zakat scholarship, extending beyond traditional Muslim-majority contexts. Overall, the data reveal that while Southeast Asia (notably Indonesia and Malaysia) forms the intellectual core of zakat governance research, there is a discernible expansion toward a more global dialogue incorporating diverse socio-political and economic settings.

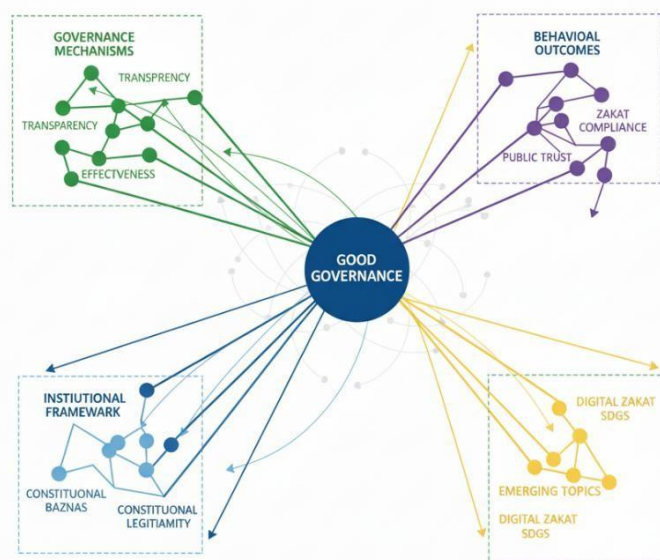


Figure 4. Visualizing the Discourse: A Bibliometric Perspective

A bibliometric analysis of the literature's key terms offers a revealing cartography of the field. The resulting network visualization positions "Good Governance" as the central, dominant hub, a

finding that corroborates our thematic analysis and underscores its foundational status. This core is surrounded by several distinct yet interconnected clusters. A prominent Governance Mechanisms cluster tightly links good governance to its operational components: transparency, accountability, and effectiveness. Emanating from this is a Behavioral Outcomes cluster, which vividly illustrates the established causal pathways through which governance perceptions influence critical dependent variables like public trust and zakat compliance (Abdul Rahman et al., 2020; Saputra & Firdaus, 2022).

Interestingly, the Institutional Framework cluster highlights the strong conceptual bond between Constitutional Legitimacy and BAZNAS, visually reinforcing the importance of the state-law-religion nexus in the Indonesian context. What is perhaps more telling are the emerging topics located on the network's edges. Concepts like "Digital Zakat" and "SDGs" appear as nascent nodes with weaker connections to the core themes. This structural pattern not only validates the current research priorities but also acts as a diagnostic tool, pinpointing potential frontiers for future inquiry, such as the underexplored relationship between digitalization and institutional legitimacy or the need for more comparative cross-country studies (Ali & Hatta, 2021).

In-depth Thematic Analysis

1. The Unassailable Primacy of Good Governance

It is nearly impossible to overstate the dominance of good governance as the central paradigm in this body of literature. The consensus is clear: the principles of transparency, accountability, and effectiveness are not merely administrative best practices but are, in fact, the very lifeblood of institutional credibility and, by extension, zakat compliance. What the literature compellingly reveals, however, is that in the context of zakat, these principles take on a unique, dual character. They are simultaneously managerial imperatives and religious obligations (*amanah*). A failure in transparency is therefore not just an operational failure but a breach of sacred trust, a nuance that profoundly shapes stakeholder expectations (Ahmad & Rahman, 2019; Karim, 2020).

The sophisticated use of quantitative methods, particularly PLS-SEM, has moved this discourse beyond assertion to demonstration. Studies across diverse contexts like Nigeria and Malaysia have meticulously mapped and validated the statistical pathways linking transparency and accountability directly to higher compliance rates, with the construct of "trust" consistently emerging as a critical mediating variable. Yet, for all the empirical validation, a persistent theme in qualitative work is the "implementation gap." The challenge, as Müller (2016) and Herianingrum et al. (2022) astutely observe, lies in the messy, complex reality of translating these universally lauded principles into the day-to-day operations of often bureaucratic and politically sensitive institutions (Farouk et al., 2018; Abdul Rahman et al., 2020; Müller, 2016; Herianingrum et al., 2022).

2. The BAZNAS Phenomenon: Legitimacy at the Intersection of State and Sharia

A distinctive and richly explored strand of research focuses intensely on the constitutional legitimacy of BAZNAS in Indonesia. This discourse grapples with a fascinating hybridity: BAZNAS as an entity that is both a religious body fulfilling a divine injunction and a quasi-state institution operating under the authority of national law. This dual identity is its greatest strength and its most complex challenge. Scholars like Huda et al. (2019) argue that this state-backed legitimacy provides an unparalleled framework for standardization, scale, and integration with national development agendas, setting it apart from more community-based models.

However, the literature introduces a crucial refinement to the understanding of legitimacy. It suggests a dynamic interplay between constitutional legitimacy (granted by the state) and performance-based legitimacy (earned from the public). A legal mandate, while powerful, is not sufficient. As Saputra and Firdaus (2022) demonstrate, the public's trust in BAZNAS is ultimately contingent on its perceived effectiveness and integrity. Thus, the constitutional framework creates the stage, but it is the institution's performance in governance that determines whether the audience the *muzakki* will play their part. This creates a virtuous cycle where formal authority enables effective action, which in turn reinforces social trust and solidifies the institution's rightful standing.

3. The Psychology of Compliance: Beyond Obligation

The quest to understand what drives an individual to fulfill their zakat obligation has generated one of the most theoretically engaged sub-fields. Here, the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been particularly illuminating, moving explanations beyond simplistic religiosity

to a more nuanced psychological model. Research consistently shows that intention to pay zakat is a product of a personal positive attitude towards the duty, the social and religious pressures one feels (subjective norms), and the practical confidence in one's ability to calculate and pay (perceived behavioral control) (Mat Daud & Wahid, 2025).

A critical insight that emerges from this work is the moderating role of religiosity. Interestingly, Farouk et al. (2018) found that for highly religious individuals, the influence of subjective norms the desire to meet community and religious expectations is significantly amplified. This suggests that compliance campaigns in deeply religious societies might effectively leverage social and religious narratives. Nevertheless, the literature resists a purely individualistic explanation. The institutional factor is inescapable. Trust in the zakat organization is not a secondary concern but a primary determinant. This trust is painstakingly built through demonstrable good governance through transparent financial reports and visible, impactful distribution programs (Alimusa et al., 2025; Syed et al., 2022). The compliance decision, therefore, emerges as a calculated act of faith, contingent on both internal belief and external evidence of institutional trustworthiness.

4. The Digital Disruption: Reimagining Zakat for the 21st Century

Perhaps the most dynamic and rapidly evolving theme is the digital transformation of zakat. This is no longer a speculative future but an ongoing process, documented in real-time by researchers. The discourse moves beyond viewing technology as a mere tool for efficiency, framing it instead as a potential game-changer for core governance challenges. Digital platforms, from mobile payment apps to blockchain-based distribution trackers, are portrayed as mechanisms that can inherently bolster transparency, reduce manual intermediation (and thus opportunities for error or corruption), and dramatically expand reach (Mulyani & Septyanto, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic, as explored by Pericoli (2022), acted as an unexpected but powerful catalyst, forcing institutions to adopt digital solutions for operational continuity and in the process, demonstrating their viability and value. Yet, the literature is not naively optimistic. It also sounds cautionary notes about the "digital divide" that could exclude the elderly or rural poor, the looming threat of cybersecurity breaches, and the urgent need for regulatory frameworks that can keep pace with technological innovation in Islamic social finance. The exploration of how technologies like blockchain can create immutable, publicly verifiable records of zakat flow represents a particularly promising and novel frontier for future research.

5. A Global Mandate: Zakat and the Sustainable Development Goals

In a bold reframing of zakat's role, a growing contingent of scholars is weaving it into the global tapestry of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This thematic area is strategically significant, as it positions zakat not just as a pillar of Islamic worship but as a substantive, faith-based instrument for achieving universal development targets like poverty eradication (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), and quality education (SDG 4) (Aziz et al., 2025; Bin Ab. Nasir et al., 2020).

This discourse is arguably one of the most potent for enhancing the external legitimacy and relevance of zakat in the 21st century. It provides a common language for zakat institutions to engage with international development agencies, governments, and non-Muslim stakeholders. Pioneering studies are beginning to move from conceptual alignment to empirical measurement, such as the work of Aziz et al. (2025) who employ multilevel modeling to assess zakat's tangible impact on human development indices. The central challenge that emerges is the need to develop rigorous, standardized metrics to quantify zakat's contribution to the SDGs, ensuring that its spiritual objectives are seamlessly integrated with its demonstrable socio-economic impact.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that good governance functions as the central organizing principle in zakat institutions, shaping both institutional performance and stakeholder trust. This indicates that governance is not merely a managerial tool but a foundational mechanism through which legitimacy is constructed and sustained. From an institutional perspective, this aligns with Institutional Theory, which posits that organizations must conform to normative expectations to gain legitimacy and stability. The dominance of transparency, accountability, and effectiveness in the findings confirms that zakat institutions operate within a dual framework of regulatory compliance

and moral obligation. This result is consistent with recent studies emphasizing governance quality as a determinant of trust and compliance in Islamic finance (Abdul Rahim et al., 2024; Aziz et al., 2025; Qutaiba et al., 2024). However, this study extends prior research by showing that governance in zakat institutions is not purely technical but intrinsically ethical, rooted in the concept of amanah. The implication is that governance failures in this context carry not only operational consequences but also moral and religious repercussions, thereby intensifying stakeholder expectations.

Another key finding reveals that constitutional legitimacy alone is insufficient to ensure institutional effectiveness, highlighting the dynamic interplay between formal authority and performance-based legitimacy. This suggests that legal recognition, while necessary, must be continuously reinforced through demonstrable governance outcomes. Theoretically, this finding supports and refines the notion of legitimacy within Institutional Theory by distinguishing between *de jure* legitimacy and *de facto* legitimacy. Previous studies have similarly argued that public trust in zakat institutions depends more on perceived performance than on legal status (Saputra & Firdaus, 2022; Huda et al., 2019; Rahman & Mustapha, 2025). Nevertheless, this study advances the discourse by conceptualizing legitimacy as a cyclical process, where governance performance reinforces trust, which in turn strengthens institutional authority. This perspective challenges earlier assumptions that state endorsement automatically translates into social acceptance (Balarabe, 2025; Öztürk, 2024). Consequently, the findings highlight the need for zakat institutions to prioritize performance transparency as a strategic tool for sustaining legitimacy.

The analysis further indicates that transparency and accountability operate as primary drivers of zakat compliance through the mediating role of trust. This suggests a causal mechanism in which governance practices shape stakeholder perceptions, ultimately influencing behavioral outcomes. From the standpoint of Theory of Planned Behavior, trust can be interpreted as a factor that strengthens attitudes and perceived behavioral control, thereby increasing compliance intentions. Empirical studies across different contexts have consistently validated this relationship, demonstrating that higher transparency leads to increased willingness to pay zakat through formal institutions (Farouk et al., 2018; Wahyuni-TD et al., 2021; Alimusa et al., 2025). However, the present findings extend this model by emphasizing the institutional dimension of trust, rather than focusing solely on individual cognition. This indicates that compliance is not only a function of personal religiosity but also of institutional credibility. The implication is that improving governance practices can have a multiplier effect on compliance rates, reinforcing the socio-economic role of zakat.

A significant insight emerging from the findings is the growing importance of digital transformation as a governance-enhancing mechanism in zakat management. This suggests that technology is not merely an operational tool but a structural enabler of transparency and efficiency. The integration of digital platforms, including online payment systems and data management tools, reflects an institutional adaptation to contemporary technological pressures, as explained by Institutional Theory. Recent studies have highlighted the role of digitalization in improving financial transparency and expanding access to zakat services (Mulyani & Septyanto, 2022; Abdul-Rahman et al., 2023; Aziz et al., 2025). However, this study contributes a more critical perspective by identifying digitalization as a double-edged phenomenon. While it enhances accountability and reduces inefficiencies, it also introduces challenges such as digital inequality and cybersecurity risks. This finding expands existing literature by framing digital transformation as both an opportunity and a constraint, thereby calling for more adaptive and inclusive governance strategies in zakat institutions.

The findings also reveal a strong alignment between zakat governance and the Sustainable Development Goals, indicating that zakat has the potential to function as a strategic instrument for socio-economic development. This suggests a conceptual shift from viewing zakat solely as a religious obligation toward understanding it as a development-oriented financial mechanism. Previous research has emphasized the contribution of zakat to poverty alleviation and social welfare (Aziz et al., 2020; Nurhasanah, 2023; Syamsuri et al., 2022). However, this study extends the discussion by highlighting the role of governance quality in determining the effectiveness of zakat in achieving SDGs. The findings imply that without strong governance frameworks, the developmental potential of zakat cannot be fully realized. This reinforces the argument that governance should be positioned as a strategic driver of impact rather than a procedural requirement. Consequently, the

integration of SDG-oriented metrics into zakat management emerges as a critical area for future development.

Another important finding concerns the theoretical integration of governance frameworks, particularly the convergence of Stakeholder Theory and Maqasid al-Shariah in explaining zakat management practices. This indicates that zakat governance operates at the intersection of institutional accountability and ethical imperatives. From the perspective of Stakeholder Theory, zakat institutions must address the expectations of multiple stakeholders, including donors, beneficiaries, and regulators. Simultaneously, Maqasid al-Shariah provides a normative foundation that ensures alignment with broader objectives such as justice and welfare. Previous studies have often treated these frameworks separately (Awa et al., 2024; Hansen, 2023; Mansour et al., 2017), but the present findings demonstrate their complementary nature. This integration represents a significant theoretical contribution, as it bridges the gap between normative Islamic principles and modern governance theories. The implication is that effective zakat governance requires both ethical alignment and institutional accountability, rather than relying on a single theoretical perspective.

Finally, the study highlights the contextual concentration of zakat governance research in Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, which has significant implications for the generalizability of findings. This suggests that the dominance of BAZNAS as a case study may limit the applicability of conclusions to other institutional contexts. While previous studies have acknowledged regional variations in zakat systems (Jin & Kim, 2021; Lee et al., 2025; Nieuwenhuis, 2022), this study provides a more critical examination of how institutional structures shape research trends. The reliance on Indonesian data may obscure alternative governance models emerging in other regions, such as decentralized or community-based systems. This raises important questions about the universality of governance frameworks in Islamic social finance. Therefore, future research should adopt comparative and cross-country approaches to develop more globally applicable models. Despite this limitation, the study contributes to the literature by providing a comprehensive and integrative framework that advances the understanding of zakat governance in both theoretical and practical terms.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive synthesis of zakat governance literature by critically examining the relationship between constitutional legitimacy and good governance from an Islamic economics perspective, with BAZNAS as a central case. The findings reveal that constitutional legitimacy, while offering a strong institutional foundation for coordination and policy integration, is not sufficient to ensure institutional effectiveness or public trust. Instead, legitimacy must be understood as a dynamic construct that is continuously reinforced through transparent, accountable, and efficient governance practices. In this context, good governance emerges as a critical determinant of zakat compliance and institutional sustainability, bridging the gap between formal authority and societal trust. This study further contributes theoretically by integrating Institutional Theory with Maqasid al-Shariah, offering a more holistic framework for understanding how governance practices can respond to regulatory pressures while maintaining ethical and social objectives.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that zakat institutions should leverage their constitutional mandate as a platform to strengthen transparency, enhance stakeholder engagement, and adopt innovative governance approaches, including digital transformation and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Policymakers are encouraged to design regulatory frameworks that balance accountability with institutional flexibility, enabling zakat organizations to adapt to evolving socio-economic challenges. Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its reliance on secondary data and the geographical concentration of existing research, indicating the need for future studies to adopt comparative, mixed-method, and impact-oriented approaches. Ultimately, the advancement of zakat governance depends on the effective integration of legal authority, governance quality, and ethical principles, ensuring its role as both a religious obligation and a strategic instrument for sustainable socio-economic development.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS

B.F. took the lead in conceptualizing the study, designing the research framework, conducting the systematic literature review, and drafting the manuscript. A.S.M. contributed to the development of the theoretical framework, particularly in the areas of Islamic economics and governance, and provided critical revisions to strengthen the intellectual arguments. S. was involved in data curation, supporting the literature screening process, and assisting in the organization of the research findings. A.N.K. contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the data, particularly in synthesizing thematic patterns and identifying emerging research trends. B.Y. assisted in reviewing the methodological rigor of the study and ensuring alignment with systematic review standards. C.E. contributed to manuscript refinement, language editing, and ensuring clarity and coherence throughout the paper.

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