

# THE IMPACT OF ZAKAT DELIVERY BY ISLAMIC REGAL LEADERSHIP ON ASNAF IN PERLIS

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the impact of Islamic regal leadership on zakat delivery to *asnaf* (a group of people deserving of zakat) in Perlis. Bestowed with the constitutional authority over the state's Islamic administration (including zakat), the regal leadership plays an important role in the effective delivery of zakat in alleviating the poor from poverty and destitution. In this article, the role of regal leadership is demonstrated through the efforts of Crown Prince of Perlis Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra Jamalulail. This article argues that His Royal Highness's role in zakat delivery has been governed by close adherence to the constitution, Islamic law, as well as Islamic principles of effective governance, all of which towards benefiting the poor. This study adopted a qualitative approach where data is collected through in-depth interviews with state religious officials and 30 respondents representing the state's zakat recipient. The findings of this study revealed that Islamic regal leadership had a significant impact on the livelihood of *asnaf* in Perlis, yielding positive snowballing effects while opening tremendous opportunities and potential for the poor to finally transition out of poverty.

**Keywords:** Islamic regal leadership, *zakat* delivery, *asnaf*, poverty alleviation

## Introduction

*Zakat* delivery through Islamic regal leadership practices is a concept that has been in practice in the state of Perlis. Destitution in Perlis is marked by the vast impoverishment issues where the poor lack the means to pay for their day-to-day basic needs and are deprived of having a decent quality of life. This situation calls for an urgent need of intervention by the regal leadership, since, as understood by the poor in Perlis, regal leaders are royal umbrellas that provide them with protection and help solve their hardships. As the heir, Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra Jamalullail, the Crown Prince of Perlis, just like his father, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin ibni Almarhum Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail, the Raja of Perlis, have iterated the importance of upholding the role and responsibilities of the

royal institution in protecting the people of Perlis so that they are not deprived of their rights and making sure that they do live in harmony. His Royal Highness Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra Jamalullail, who is also the Yang DiPertua of Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Perlis (MAIPs), also highlighted his concerns regarding Malay rights and privileges, as written in the constitution of Malaysia in Article 153.<sup>1</sup> This article focuses on the duties and responsibilities of regal leaders in solving the challenges in *zakat* delivery, specifically by Tuanku Syed Faizuddin, not just in the capacity of the Crown Prince of Perlis, but also as the Yang DiPertua of MAIPs, as an Islamic regal leader, has persistently made sure that all responsible Muslims carry out their obligations towards the poor based on the guidance of the Holy Quran and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Islamic regal leadership practices in Perlis aim to care for the poor, provide justice, and break them from the vicious circle of poverty while protecting their human rights through Islamic effective governance.

## Literature Review

Protecting human rights through the implementation of effective governance was heavily stressed by Kofi Annan, the then Secretary-General of the United Nations (1997-2006).<sup>2</sup> Effective governance ensures beneficial interactions between ruler and community while assuring the superior standard of leadership and decision-making that take into account the community's opinions seriously, thereby justifying their position as trusted leaders by the people.<sup>3</sup> Effective governance, it is fair to say, describes the leader's responsibility to lead for the benefit of the community as a whole. In Islam, effective governance refers to the concept of *al-siyasah al-syar'iyah*, which requires Islamic leaders to protect the needs and interests of the Muslim community while carrying out moral goodness through good mannerisms and good behaviour.<sup>4</sup> The primary source of *al-siyasah al-syar'iyah* came from the Holy Quran and the *Sunnah*, according to the *syarak* (Islamic teachings and law). *Al-siyasah al-syar'iyah*, complemented with Islamic ethical behaviours, conduct, rules and regulations specified in Islamic law, then helps leaders make good moral decisions while avoiding bad ones. Leaders who carry out these moral responsibilities and demonstrate their trustworthiness will undoubtedly be able to be relied on and benefit the Muslim community while simultaneously providing for their needs.

This study will analyse His Royal Highness' Islamic regal leadership in light of the Islamic concept of effective governance or *al-siyasah al-syar'iyah*. For instance, one of the ways in which His Royal Highness dealt with the challenges in *zakat* delivery to the *asnaf* was by willingly and personally delivering the *zakat* money, together with other contributions and aid to the *asnaf* in Perlis, and

taking full responsibility for ensuring that all the *asnaf*'s needs and wants were well taken care of.

Additionally, this study also highlights the protection of human rights as the basis of *asnaf* protection in Perlis. In Perlis, His Royal Highness insisted that the *asnaf* must benefit from his tremendous efforts in protecting their human rights, interests and needs, which is a big part of His Royal Highness' responsibility as an active Islamic regal leader. This is done in accordance with and in obedience to the royal order of his father, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin ibni Almarhum Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail, who emphasised that rulers must be responsible in protecting the people so that they can live harmoniously and without being deprived of their rights.<sup>5</sup> This study argues that His Royal Highness has undertaken this responsibility earnestly through considerable leadership efforts towards benefitting the poor, all while upholding the constitution, conforming to the rules of Islamic law, as well as practising Islamic effective governance.

Islamic regal leadership based on Islamic beliefs and strategies has certainly improved the livelihood of *asnaf* in Perlis, resulting in positive snowballing effects and opening tremendous opportunities for the poor to finally transition out of poverty. Additionally, Islamic regal leadership involvement has improved the lives of the poor, as the magnitude of the His Royal Highness' regal standing has indirectly accelerated the care for the poor in Perlis for the better. This article emphasises the importance of caring for the *asnaf*, which has been accomplished through impeccable *zakat* delivery to the *asnaf* through Islamic regal leadership practises.

## Research Question

This study adopted a qualitative approach which investigated and provided a deeper understanding of the social phenomena in question.<sup>6</sup> The research question in this study is as follows: Is Islamic regal leadership beneficial in alleviating poverty amongst the *asnaf* in Perlis?<sup>7</sup>

## Objective of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact on *asnaf* through the benefits of *zakat* delivery by an Islamic regal leader in Perlis.

## Research Methodology

In this study, a qualitative method was implemented by engaging in in-depth

face-to-face interviews accompanied by video recordings and photography. The information gathered was all from interviews carried out with 30 *asnafs*, the Mufti of Perlis, the Chief Executive Officer of MAIPs and a special audience with His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Perlis. The sophisticated computer software Atlas.ti. 8 was deployed in order to investigate and analyse the views of these different respondents. The raw data collected from all participants were transcribed, interpreted and put into Atlas.ti 8. Data were then analysed, translated and placed into the context of the study. The analysed data using Atlas.ti 8 produced systematic data outputs which further enhanced the validity of the study and the reliability of the outcomes.<sup>8</sup> Atlas.ti 8 promoted better management of data, the participant audio recording into interpretative text. Heavy fieldwork became compulsory and visits to the *asnaf* homes in the villages (*kampungs*) were essential and contributed to the research greatly. The geographical scope took place within the state of Perlis and the respondents were above the age of 20 years old. They were directly involved in *asnaf*, poverty and *zakat* delivery issues. The group of participants and sampling was made up of a cross-section of *asnafs* who live in different parts of Perlis and are registered under the care of MAIPs. Semi-structured (open-ended) interview questions were used as the main interview instrument.

## Results

### **Benefits of Islamic Regal Leadership in Poverty Alleviation Amongst the *Asnaf* in Perlis**

The results from the case studies revealed the various ‘benefits’ of Islamic regal leadership in alleviating poverty in Perlis, which made a huge impact on *asnafs* in Perlis. The benefits presented were divided into eight parts and were summarized in Figure 1 below.

1. Fulfilment of *asnaf*'s needs
2. Regal leadership influence
3. Gratefulness of *asnaf*
4. Impact of regal leadership
5. Rapid responsiveness by His Royal Highness and MAIPs
6. Opportunity for *asnaf* to meet His Royal Highness
7. His Royal Highness' Islamic leadership traits
8. Increase the distribution of *zakat*.

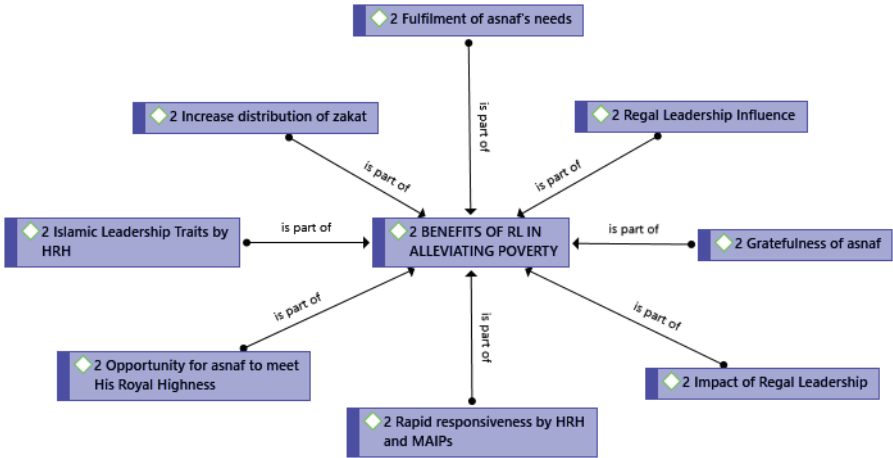


Figure 1: The Benefits of Regal Leadership in Alleviating Poverty

Atlas.ti 8 was deployed to analyse the data from the case studies and the findings revealed that ‘fulfilment of *asnaf*’s needs’ received the most response in the context of benefits of regal leadership in alleviating poverty in Perlis and this was followed by ‘regal leadership influence’. Following them are ‘Gratefulness of *asnaf*’ and ‘impact of regal leadership’ and respectively ‘rapid responsiveness by His Royal Highness and MAIPs’, ‘opportunity for *asnaf* to meet His Royal Highness’, ‘His Royal Highness’ Islamic leadership traits’ and lastly, ‘increase distribution of zakat’. Table 1 below depicts the breakdown of each of the beneficial aspects of regal leadership towards the relevant participants.

	HRH	Elite Members	Zakat Contributors	<i>Asnaf</i>	Totals
● 2 Fulfilment of <i>asnaf</i> ’s needs	4	7	0	30	41
● 2 Regal Leadership Influence	2	34	0	1	37
● 2 Gratefulness of <i>asnaf</i>	0	10	0	22	32
● 2 Impact of Regal Leadership	5	24	2	1	32
● 2 Rapid responsiveness by HRH and MAIPs	1	8	0	13	22
● 2 Opportunity for <i>asnaf</i> to meet His Royal Highness	5	5	0	7	17
● 2 Islamic Leadership Traits by HRH	2	9	0	2	13

• 2 Increase distribution of <i>zakat</i>	2	3	0	0	5
<b>Totals</b>	21	100	2	76	199

**Table 1.** Benefits of Islamic Regal Leadership in Alleviating Poverty

### Fulfilment of *Asnaf's* Needs

‘Fulfilment of *asnaf's* needs’ was most significant in the analysis, with most responses by the *asnafs* indicating that *zakat* delivery through Islamic regal leadership benefitted them in poverty alleviation. Table 1 above depicted the fulfilment of *asnafs* which were gathered from the findings from the interviews. The *asnafs* revealed that they benefitted tremendously from Islamic regal leadership in terms of poverty alleviation. This was stated by recipient 1 who was one the 30 *asnafs* interviewed:

Recipient 1 stated that:

“I am fulfilled with the *zakat* delivery and this makes me less worried. It is impactful and it makes things so convenient”.

Recipient 2 mentioned that:

“I am fulfilled and yes this *zakat* has eased us....yes MAIPs has helped a lot with everything”.

On the other hand, the CEO of MAIPs mentioned that:

“When His Royal Highness pays a visit to their village, the *asnaf* have such high respects and hope towards His Royal Highness simply because they feel that His Royal Highness is the person who will be able to solve their problems and fulfil their needs”.

Both *zakat* recipients 1 and 2 received their rapid humanitarian response and aid through MAIPs by having His Royal Highness deliver the *zakat* to them, personally, by hand. Recipient 1 indicated that receiving the *zakat* was fulfilling and had lessened his concern about how to resolve his problems and grievances. Recipient 1 also mentioned that the *zakat* was impactful and convenient.

Recipient 2, on the other hand, mentioned how MAIPs has helped a lot with everything (their troubles). Fulfilment of *asnaf's* needs was also among the responses by the elite members of the interviews as well as the His Royal Highness. As mentioned by the CEO of MAIPs, the *asnaf* have great respect for His Royal Highness and rely on His Royal Highness’ Islamic regal leadership to solve their problems and meet their needs. When His Royal Highness visited

their villages, the *asnaf* expressed their grievances and problems to him. The findings highlighted the significance of Islamic regal leadership, and Table 1 clearly shows the benefits of Islamic regal leadership in alleviating poverty in Perlis.

### **Regal Leadership Influence**

The findings have shown that His Royal Highness' regal leadership influence benefitted the *asnaf* during *zakat* delivery, resulting in poverty alleviation. The findings also stated that His Royal Highness' regal influence played a significant role in benefiting the *asnaf*. According to the CEO of MAIPs (in the interview):

“The Jamalullail bloodline dates back from the descendants of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings be Upon Him) and this makes it very natural for His Royal Highness' leadership to be very persistent towards his passion, commitment and willingness. It cannot be denied that His Royal Highness' down-to-earth characteristics may be due to the fact that His Royal Highness' bloodline comes from the lineage of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings be Upon Him). What makes it interesting is that His Royal Highness' descendants are the only ones in Malaysia that have lineage from the messenger of ALLAH the Almighty. Jamalullail ancestry from Perlis, Al-Hashimi in Jordan and Al-Hassani in Morocco are the only 3 descendants who have direct bloodline lineage with Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings be Upon Him)”.

In addition, the Mufti of Perlis mentioned that:

“His Royal Highness is part of an institution which authorizes him to command or give orders since he is vested with this authority as an *Uli-al-Amri* (Islamic leader). It is required for His Royal Highness to ensure that *zakat* is collected and then delivered to the rightful beneficiaries (*asnaf*)”.

Islamic regal leadership influence and greatness appeared to be a great benefit in alleviating poverty among the *asnafs* in Perlis. The CEO of MAIPs stated that His Royal Highness' leadership was visible through his passion, commitment, and willingness which was partly due to the Jamalullail genealogy, which was traced back to the lineage of descendants of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which could explain His Royal Highness' natural inborn Islamic leadership characteristic.

On the other hand, the Mufti of Perlis mentioned that His Royal Highness is

part of an institution which authorizes him to command and give orders. This is due to His Royal Highness' position as the *Uli-al-Amr* (one vested with authority as an Islamic leader) which requires His Royal Highness to deliver the *zakat* to the poor *asnaf* as part of his royal obligation and duty.

In both cases, His Royal Highness' great influence as an Islamic regal leader caused him to become very persistent and very passionate towards delivering the *zakat* by hand to the *asnaf* and assisting them as much as possible in resolving their grievances and troubles, while fulfilling his father's orders, which is to protect the human rights of the people so that they can live harmoniously.

### Gratefulness of Asnaf

Gratefulness of *asnaf* has been revealed as one of the benefits of regal leadership in alleviating poverty as presented in Table 2. Islamic regal leadership has proven to be beneficial for the *asnaf*, indicated by the assistance the latter received from MAIPs under the leadership of His Royal Highness. This study revealed that the *asnaf* expressed gratitude for the participation of Islamic regal leadership participation in delivering *zakat* to them. This gratitude was expressed by recipient 3 as follows:

“The impact is good and I am grateful. I would like to say thank you to MAIPs for helping and giving *zakat* to assist my family. Our lives have changed 360 degrees and it is now so different from before. Thank You, Your Royal Highness”.

Recipient 4 responded as follows:

“I have received a lot of assistance from MAIPs, a lot. I am very satisfied and grateful. Thank you so much for giving us assistance, His Royal Highness has helped me a lot”.

As demonstrated by recipient 3 above, the benefits of Islamic regal leadership in MAIPs have changed their lives 360 degrees. This was achieved through the *zakat* delivery by His Royal Highness on behalf of MAIPs to the *asnaf* to assist the poor families. The *asnaf* expressed their gratefulness by thanking His Royal Highness.

Recipient 4 indicated that he has received a lot of assistance from MAIPs and that he is very satisfied and grateful. He expressed his gratefulness as well as thankfulness towards His Royal Highness' efforts and to MAIPs for their assistance. In both cases, it was evident that recipients of *zakat* from MAIPs which were hand delivered by His Royal Highness were truly grateful.



### Impact of Regal Leadership

The impact of regal leadership in zakat delivery to the asnaf is great. This case study has demonstrated remarkable findings and has proven that His Royal Highness' leadership has been significantly impactful as mentioned by the CEO of MAIPs:

“I always remember the words of Brother Nouman Ali Khan when he went back to the United States after his filming here in Perlis. “Very inspiring. MashaALLAH.” Very inspirational since the topic of inspiration is very important and is found in the Messenger’s (Peace and Blessings be Upon Him) hadith, *Sunnatan Hasanatan Fa Lahu Ajuha Wa Ajru Man ‘Amila Biha...* which means; whoever begins to show a good example in Islam, therefore he will receive great rewards from ALLAH the Almighty for his good deeds. Good rewards from ALLAH the Almighty also go to the people who follow his good-doings”

The Mufti of Perlis pointed out that:

“In the context of the Malay Rulers, *zakat* is placed under the responsibility of the royals. If this institution is well managed with honesty and trust, it will give a positive impact towards the Malay Royal Institution. The way that it is managed, and the way that it delivers to the people will make it most respectable. People will always remember their rulers, apart from their power, they will always remember what the rulers have given to them. Therefore, in terms of zakat delivery, even though the *zakat* money does not come from His Royal Highness’s own pocket, the people will always remember that it has been delivered to them by hand from His Royal Highness himself, turning it into a fond memory. He will say that His Royal Highness personally hand-delivered this *zakat* to my hands. This makes the royal subjects appreciate *zakat* in Perlis and that makes the *zakat* delivery successful. Through this *zakat* delivery method, the regal leader becomes most respectable, loved and appreciated. This systematic *zakat* delivery method reflects regal leadership by His Royal Highness. His Royal Highness has his powerful elite members to assist him. When His Royal Highness cycles to a village to deliver *zakat*, there will be a special setting that will benefit all the people around it. We are able to appreciate the strength and power of such regal leadership. This must be done. We are already at a level of gratefulness and thankfulness but will keep on strengthening

this fact”.

The Mufti of Perlis continues to say:

“Normally His Royal Highness would like to meet his subjects, and his subjects would like to see His Royal Highness hand deliver the *zakat* personally. This is what’s impactful about His Royal Highness. Regarding the hand-delivery of *zakat*, it is very good, and introducing himself and the institution is equally good too. In addition to that, it is such an honour to the individuals that His Royal Highness is physically present himself because when *zakat* is personally hand-delivered by His Royal Highness, it gives the feeling that the *zakat* is actually from His Royal Highness himself. The reaction and the feeling of the *zakat* recipient are overwhelming and ecstatic beyond words, even though it is just *zakat* money. The most impactful is when His Royal Highness cycles to the villages. That in itself is extraordinary for a regal leader. His Royal Highness’ cycling program has certainly attracted many *zakat* contributors from outside Perlis because His Royal Highness’ cycling program becomes an outstanding “promotion” or selling point. Again, that in itself is beneficial and very impactful. A very attractive way to collect *zakat* for Perlis”.

The impact of Islamic regal leadership on *zakat* delivery to *asnaf* in Perlis seemed to be an encouragement and advancement to the way *zakat* is delivered to the *asnaf*. His Royal Highness’ efforts became somewhat inspirational and set a good example for Islam. The CEO of MAIPs stated in his interview that the founder of the Bayyinah Institute for Arabic and Quranic Studies, Nouman Ali Khan, (an American Muslim speaker, theologian and Arabic instructor), commented on his experience with the Crown Prince as “very inspiring, *masyaALLAH*” after filming his cycling program while visiting the *asnaf* in Perlis.

The CEO of MAIPs continues commenting on the topic of “inspiration”, which is very important and is found in the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): “*Sunnatan Hasanatan Fa Lahu Ajruha Wa Ajru Man ‘Amila Biha*” which describes the importance of inspiring others by setting a good example in Islam. It is said that whoever begins to set a good example in Islam will be rewarded handsomely by ALLAH the Almighty for his good deeds. Similarly, good rewards are given to those who follow his good deeds.

In addition to that, the Mufti of Perlis emphasised the importance of Islamic regal leadership by elaborating on the Malay Rulers and how *zakat* was placed under the responsibility of the royals. According to the Mufti of Perlis, if the

*zakat* institution is well managed with honesty and trust, this will result in a positive impact towards the Malay Royal Institution. In the case of Perlis, the way *zakat* was managed and delivered to the people was admirable. The *asnaf* will always remember their ruler, not just for his power, but also for what the ruler has given to them. The Mufti also could not stress enough that even though the *zakat* money does not come from His Royal Highness' own pocket, the *asnaf* will still remember that it has been delivered with His Royal Highness' own two hands. This had made a big impact on the *asnaf* because it created fond memories for them. The *asnaf* will always remember His Royal Highness' personal hand-delivery of the *zakat* to their hands, which made the regal leader become even more respectable, loved and appreciated.

According to the Mufti of Perlis, this *zakat* delivery method was most appreciated by the *asnaf* and made progress in Perlis because it was systematic and reflected good Islamic regal leadership traits by His Royal Highness. The Mufti also mentioned the powerful elite members who accompanied and assisted His Royal Highness with the *zakat* distribution and rapid humanitarian aid response to the *asnaf* in Perlis. For His Royal Highness' cycling visits to the villages, a special setting has been prepared, and these settings benefited the village and all the people in the surrounding areas. The Mufti emphasised the *asnaf*'s appreciation for the strength and power of regal leadership, and the level of gratitude and thankfulness continued to flourish many folds.

The Mufti of Perlis pointed out that while His Royal Highness preferred face-to-face meetings with his subjects, his subjects also loved meeting His Royal Highness, especially during personally hand-delivered *zakat* sessions. The Mufti commented that the hand-delivered *zakat* method was very impactful. Not only was the hand-delivery method effective, but it also provided an opportunity for His Royal Highness to introduce himself and demonstrate the importance of his Royal Institution. It was a great honour for the *asnaf* individuals to experience His Royal Highness' presence. The overwhelming feeling was impactful to the *asnaf*, where many became ecstatic beyond words. This happened although they were aware that the *zakat* money came from MAIPs rather than His Royal Highness. The strong impact was clearly visible here.

On the same note, the Mufti added that when His Royal Highness cycles to villages or *kampungs*, it is considered extraordinary, especially coming from a regal leader. The Mufti added that His Royal Highness' cycling program serves as a promotion and a selling point, attracting many *zakat* contributors from outside Perlis who are excited to participate in the cycling program alongside His Royal Highness. This revealed the greatness and impact of regal leadership, as well as the benefits that flowed from it.

### **Rapid Responsiveness of His Royal Highness and MAIPs**

His Royal Highness' and MAIPs' rapid humanitarian aid response was very crucial and impactful for the *asnaf*, who were in desperate need of help and assistance. The findings of this study revealed that recipients of humanitarian aid responded positively and satisfactorily. As remarked by *zakat* recipient number 5:

“I am grateful that the *zakat* delivery was quick and we received assistance at the very moment we needed help. Up to this moment I am very satisfied since the response was very rapid”.

Recipient 6 mentioned that:

“Not long, very fast, very quickly. Fast. I asked for assistance this year and I received a beautiful house”.

Recipient 5 mentioned in the interview that he was very grateful for the quick delivery of *zakat* and that it arrived just when he needed it. This *asnaf* recipient was satisfied with the speed with which His Royal Highness and MAIPs delivered the *zakat*. Recipient 6, on the other hand, commented that the *zakat* delivery by His Royal Highness and MAIPs did not take long, was very fast, and delivered quickly. Recipient 6 had asked for housing assistance and received a beautiful house within the same year. Both recipients 5 and 6 responded positively to the speed with which *zakat* was delivered to them, as it had a significant impact on their lives.

### **Opportunity for *Asnaf* to Meet His Royal Highness**

During His Royal Highness' cycling visits to the villages, the *asnaf* had the opportunity to meet and approach His Royal Highness to express their grievances and problems. His Royal Highness was very approachable as mentioned by recipient 7: “Yes, I had the opportunity to meet His Royal Highness just recently during his visit to the mosque”. Recipient number 8 stated that: “I have met His Royal Highness many times. I have followed His Royal Highness to Kampung Balik Bukit before”. Recipient 9 stated that: “Yes, I met His Royal Highness at a mosque before and also at His Royal Highness' cycling program, 2-3 times”.

The CEO of MAIPs pointed out that:

“The *asnaf* would come and approach His Royal Highness and confide in him on their personal problems and grievances such as their destroyed homes, leaking roofs or illnesses. They are able to come close to His

Royal Highness to do this... In most cases, it was His Royal Highness who approached the *asnaf*. His Royal Highness will be the one hand delivering the *zakat* to the *asnaf*'.

Recipient 7 revealed that he had the opportunity to meet His Royal Highness just recently (during the week of the interview that had taken place) during His Royal Highness' visit to the mosque. These types of opportunities were most typical since most of the *zakat* was hand-delivered by His Royal Highness to the *asnaf*'s hands at programmes in the mosques. Recipient 8 happily stated that he had the opportunity to meet His Royal Highness many times which made a great impact on him. Recipient 9 mentioned that he had the opportunity to meet His Royal Highness two to three times before at the mosques as well as at His Royal Highness' cycling program.

The CEO of MAIPs went on to say that when the *asnaf* has the opportunity to meet His Royal Highness, they will confide in Him about their personal problems and grievances. These include problems with destroyed homes, leaking roofs and illnesses. Because they were able to get close to His Royal Highness, the *asnaf* were able to meet and confide in Him. In most cases, it was His Royal Highness' willingness to be the one who approached the *asnaf* first during the *zakat* delivery.

### **Islamic Leadership Traits by His Royal Highness**

His Royal Highness' hand-delivered *zakat* emphasised the significance of his "personal touch", as well as the uniqueness of the cycling programmes that took place. Although the *zakat* money did not come from His Royal Highness, His Royal Highness' Islamic virtues, good moral behaviour and wisdom influenced this unique *zakat* delivery practice. According to the CEO of MAIPs:

"When His Royal Highness attends a program at the mosque, it is evident that his attendance is seen to be very natural when approaching his royal subjects. His Royal Highness does not feel out of place and will always shake the hands of those he meets. I am astounded by His Royal Highness' constant inquiry into the well-being of the people he meets when delivering *zakat* at the mosque. All of this adds to the greatness and personal attributes of His Royal Highness who is easily accessible to his subjects. Many Perlis locals will say that this is not an act but stems from His Royal Highness' willingness to carry out his duties and go above and beyond. This somewhat has created the energy, motivation and inspiration for the *asnaf*. His Royal Highness will be the one volunteering to approach the *asnaf* first. His Royal Highness will be the one delivering the *zakat*. This reminds me of the obedience towards

ALLAH the Almighty which orders the believers to obey ALLAH the Almighty through *zakat* delivery. Obligations towards *zakat*. It has been mentioned in the Holy Quran that one must take from the wealthy and return it to the poor”.

The Mufti of Perlis also emphasized that:

“The personal delivery by His Royal Highness has uplifted the Royal Institution by creating impactful fond memories and experiences by the *zakat* recipients who have received *zakat* from His Royal Highness’ own hands”.

The CEO of MAIPs commented that His Royal Highness was very natural and did not feel out of place upon meeting the *asnaf* while hand-delivering the *zakat*. His Royal Highness does not mind shaking hands with each and every *asnaf* (before the COVID-19 pandemic) and has always inquired about the well-being. His Royal Highness’ greatness and personal qualities were somewhat visible because he was always easily accessible to his subjects. The *asnafs* commented saying that His Royal Highness would willingly carry out his duties and even go above and beyond. These Islamic leadership traits have created impactful energy, motivation and inspiration for the *asnaf*.

The Mufti of Perlis on the other hand specifically emphasised His Royal Highness’ hand delivery of the *zakat* to the hands of the *asnaf*, which he stated has elevated the Royal Institution.

### **Increase Distribution of *Zakat***

Islamic regal leadership has clearly helped to increase *zakat* distribution in Perlis with the active participation of His Royal Highness in *zakat* delivery. The CEO of MAIPs clarified that:

“We have successfully achieved an increase in *zakat* distribution with His Royal Highness’ active participation. We have records to prove that with His Royal Highness’ participation, the *zakat* distribution has increased. It is true that there has been an obvious increase in *zakat* collection as well and the contributors contribute because they are attracted to the cycling program alongside His Royal Highness. I am grateful to say that MAIPs have successfully increased the *zakat* distribution by as much as 20% to all *asnaf* (in general) in 2019 compared to the year 2018. This is a big increase in percentage as compared to the previous years”.

His Royal Highness mentioned that:

“We became more creative in delivering the *zakat*. Instead of trying to visit 3 to 7 *asnaf* homes in one cycling route, why not bring around 60 *asnafs* to the mosques or schools and deliver the *zakat* to them first? In 2016 we cycled 72 times....In 2017, we cycled 71 times....2018... 95 times and in 2019 we cycled 76 times. In 2020, 80 times. Although in 2017 the cycling trips were reduced, the amount distributed increased.”

Increased distribution of *zakat* was revealed in both the CEO of MAIPs and His Royal Highness' responses. The CEO of MAIPs stated that MAIPs have successfully achieved an increase in *zakat* distribution from the active participation of His Royal Highness. According to the CEO of MAIPs, there has been a noticeable increase in *zakat* collection because *zakat* contributors were drawn to the fact that they could cycle alongside His Royal Highness while distributing the *zakat* to the *asnaf*. In general, *zakat* distribution to the *asnaf* increased by 20% in 2019 compared to 2018, indicating a significant achievement and increase in percentage compared to previous years. The CEO of MAIPs expresses his gratitude for this success.

His Royal Highness, on the other hand, added that the reason for the increase in *zakat* distribution from 2016 to 2019 was because MAIPs became more creative and added 60 more *asnafs* to the mosques or schools at each *zakat* delivery program and distributed the *zakat* either in schools or mosques, before they began the cycling to meet more *asnafs*. By doing so, not only the *zakat* was distributed to the *asnaf* during the cycling, but more were able to receive *zakat* either at the mosques or schools on the same day. This certainly sped up the process of *zakat* distribution to the needy in Perlis.

## Discussion and Findings

The findings concerning the benefits of Islamic regal leadership in alleviating poverty in Perlis are as follows:

- i. Data analysis revealed that 199 responses were recorded from the eight beneficial aspects of Islamic regal leadership towards alleviating poverty in Perlis. The benefit of Islamic regal leadership that received the most response was “fulfilment of the needs of *asnaf*”.
- ii. This conclusion was fully supported by the findings from the face-to-face live interviews with the 30 *asnafs*, the elite members, and His Royal Highness. The fulfilment of *asnaf*'s needs is critical, and it is one of the aims of this research to alleviate poverty in Perlis. All 30 *asnafs* interviewed expressed fulfilment



- in a variety of ways, including how the rapid humanitarian response and aid from MAIPs, as well as the hand-delivery of *zakat* by His Royal Highness, were fulfilling and made it less worrisome for them to resolve their problems and grievances. The researcher noted the frequency with which different *asnaf* mentioned the words “*Alhamdulillah*” and “*Berpuashati*”, which translate as grateful and fulfilled, respectively. These were the responses that the researcher hoped for. For example, in one of the interviews, a respondent mentioned that the *zakat* delivered was impactful as well as convenient in alleviating grievances faced, indicating that the *asnaf*'s needs were met. Another respondent mentioned how grateful and fulfilled he felt when his life changed 360 degrees from being a *zakat* recipient to a *zakat* contributor.
- iii. The fulfilment of *asnaf*'s needs was also demonstrated in the interview with the CEO of MAIPs, who mentioned that the *asnafs* have a high regard for His Royal Highness. They have so much faith in His Royal Highness because they rely so heavily on His Royal Highness' regal leadership to solve their problems and meet their needs. When His Royal Highness paid visits to their villages and listened to their problems, the *asnafs* can express their grievances and problems directly to His Royal Highness. This research revealed the importance of regal leadership in terms of benefitting the *asnaf* in alleviating poverty in Perlis by highlighting the fulfilment of the needs of *asnafs*.

This study enhanced the unique qualities of His Royal Highness' regal leadership in terms of his “personal touch” towards his royal subjects. His Royal Highness has been described as being fully committed and possessing unique qualities, displayed through his regal leadership practices which were highly commendable.<sup>9</sup> His Royal Highness' royal subjects are privileged to be protected by the royal umbrella and this was demonstrated from the findings in the interviews presented. Fortunately, in Perlis, His Royal Highness insisted that the best way to assist poverty alleviation is for him to personally “hand-deliver” the *zakat* to the *asnaf* and every poor individual in need. This has certainly made a great impact in fulfilling the *asnaf*'s needs in many different ways. This personal touch not only allowed His Royal Highness to be more intimate in getting to know the *asnaf* better, but it also helped His Royal Highness to understand their problems more deeply. The *asnaf* were overjoyed when they were given the opportunity to meet His Royal Highness face-to-face, as it gave them a sense of security and protection, knowing that regal leadership is capable of offering them help and assistance in resolving their life problems. His Royal Highness' personal touch and personal commitment towards the *asnaf* have raised the value of the concept of regal leadership in *zakat* delivery. His Royal Highness feels that



this gesture and approach is the best way to fully understand and gain first-hand information from the *asnaf* regarding their hardship and suffering before trying to solve their problems.

## Limitations

It is possible that the sample size was small, with only 39 responders. Because of the small number of respondents, the research may have been confined to a generalisation of findings. Because the sample size was small and the researcher only had the opportunity to collect data from 39 participants, the procedure of acquiring and analysing data may have influenced the conclusions produced. The data was acquired using the triangulation method, in which the researcher relied on information gathered from three sources: literature reviews, actual fieldwork, and interviews. The limitations were as follows:

- i. The generalizability of the results was limited by the size of the participants (39) and the fact that they were straightforward and concentrated.
- ii. The trustworthiness of this data was influenced by the fact that the participants were chosen by the researcher based on the recommendations of MAIPs, which likely had some bias towards the research topic and was assured to fulfil the researcher's aims, therefore producing predictable answers.
- iii. Due to the lack of data available on Islamic regal leadership in Perlis, the results cannot confirm that leadership per se can fully facilitate and fulfil the *asnaf*'s needs as much as Islamic regal leadership could. It was imperative and of vital importance for future researchers to differentiate between Islamic regal leadership and leadership.
- iv. The research methodology's triangulation method was limited to fieldwork, interviews, and literature reviews. It would be beneficial to provide other methods of conducting this research in order to collect more data.
- v. The researcher's initial aim to interview other Islamic royal leaders in Malaysia was hindered due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The researcher also planned to tour neighbouring nations with non-Islamic regal leadership systems, such as Cambodia and Thailand, to study and investigate their poverty alleviation strategies in comparison to the one in Perlis. Due to the pandemic, these investigations will have to be placed on pause and will resume when it is safe.
- vi. Because the majority of the study took place in local communities in the state of Perlis, there was no need for the researcher to travel large distances, incurring travel and hotel costs.
- vii. The researcher's ability to obtain more information was limited by a scarcity of literature on Islamic regal leadership in zakat delivery in Perlis in particular.

## Conclusions

The conclusion of this study pointed out that the benefits from the *zakat* delivery through Islamic regal leadership had a significant impact on *asnafs* in a multitude of ways. Through the interviews, insights from the *asnafs*, the Mufti of Perlis, the CEO of MAIPs, as well as His Royal Highness have confirmed that *zakat* delivery through Islamic regal leadership practices was beneficial towards improving the lives of *asnafs*. Throughout this study, *asnafs*' life have improved financially and health-wise, gained expanded opportunities to establish enterprises, generated job opportunities for other *asnafs*, built homes for the poor, transitioned out of poverty, and began to pay *zakat* themselves—which is the ultimate goal. When *asnafs* can contribute and pay *zakat* to aid other *asnafs*, poverty is considered to be alleviated and justice is realised.

## Notes

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1. Ibid., 82-3 which emphasizes on article 153 pertaining the Malay rights and safeguarding the special position of the Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak
2. Sharifah Hayaati Syed Ismail al-Qudsy', Asmak Ab. Rahman and Mohd Izani Mohd Zain, "Efektif Governan dan Pelaksanaanya dalam Pentadbiran Islam," *Jurnal Syariah* 16, no. 3 (2018): 465-96 wrote about UN Secretary General Kofi Annan protecting human rights as a primary focus.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Paridah, *The New Age of the Kings*, 82-3
6. David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data* (London:Sage, 2015), 3.
7. This research question was based on the research question number two from the researcher's thesis entitled 'The Importance of Islamic Regal Leadership in *Zakat* Delivery to the *Asnaf* in Perlis' (2022) in relation to the data collected and analysed on Atlas.ti during the face-to-face interviews with the *asnafs*.
8. Zdenek Konopasek, "Making Thinking Possible with Atlas.ti: Computer

Assisted Qualitative Analysis as Textual Practices,” *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung. Supplement* (2007): 276-98.

9. As mentioned by Dato Dr Kamaruddin Husin (2018) in an interview in a program called “Air Tangan DiRaja” on Astro Prima regarding His Royal Highness’ personal touch and commitment towards the *asnaf*.

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