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DIGITAL COMMUNICATION GOVERNANCE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ZAKAT AT THE NATIONAL ZAKAT AGENCY (BAZNAS)

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ABSTRAK

Tata kelola komunikasi Digital memegang peran strategis dalam meningkatkan penghimpunan dana zakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana strategi komunikasi digital serta efektivitasnya dalam meningkatkan penghimpunan dana zakat. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui analisis dokumen, observasi aktivitas komunikasi lembaga amil zakat, serta kajian literatur terkait tata kelola dan komunikasi publik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lembaga zakat yang menerapkan prinsip keterbukaan informasi, dialog dua arah, dan pemanfaatan media digital cenderung dapat meningkatkan penghimpunan dana zakat. Namun, tantangan tetap muncul terkait konsistensi penyampaian informasi, keterbatasan literasi digital sebagian mustahik, dan kurang optimalnya mekanisme umpan balik publik. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya integrasi tata kelola yang baik (*good governance*) dengan strategi komunikasi digital yang partisipatif guna memperkuat efektivitas pengelolaan zakat serta meningkatkan penghimpunan dana zakat BAZNAS.

Kata kunci ; Tata kelola, Komunikasi Digital, zakat

ABSTRAK

Digital communication governance plays a strategic role in boosting zakat fund collection. This study aims to analyze digital communication strategies and their effectiveness in increasing zakat collection. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the study gathered data through document analysis, observation of zakat institutions' communication activities, and a literature review on governance and public

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communication. The results indicate that zakat institutions implementing principles of information transparency, two-way dialogue, and digital media utilization tend to achieve higher levels of zakat collection. However, challenges persist regarding the consistency of information dissemination, limited digital literacy among some mustahik (beneficiaries), and suboptimal public feedback mechanisms. These findings underscore the importance of integrating good governance with participatory digital communication strategies to enhance the effectiveness of zakat management and boost zakat collection by BAZNAS.

Keywords: Governance, Digital Communication, zakat

INTRODUCTION

Zakat occupies a distinctive position among the world's philanthropic instruments. Unlike voluntary charitable giving, zakat is a mandatory religious obligation for eligible Muslims, governed by fixed shares (nisab) and specific categories of recipients defined in the Qur'an. This dual character as an act of worship (ibadah) and as an instrument of wealth redistribution gives zakat institutions a governance mandate that is simultaneously religious, social, and financial. Various models of zakat administration have been developed across Muslim-majority countries, each seeking to maximize the contribution of zakat to social welfare, poverty alleviation, and economic justice. Zakat is therefore best understood not merely as a devotional practice, but as a formal instrument for advancing social welfare and distributive justice within the wider economy.

In Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population, the potential scale of zakat collection is exceptionally large. According to data published by the National Zakat Agency (BAZNAS), the national zakat potential is estimated in the hundreds of trillions of rupiah annually. Yet the funds actually collected remain far below this potential, and the effectiveness of institutional collection continues to be one of the central challenges facing the Indonesian zakat sector.

Table 1. National Zakat Potential in Indonesia

No	Objek Zakat	Potensi Zakat (Triliun Rupiah)
1	Zakat Pertanian	19,79
2	Zakat Peternakan	9,51
3	Zakat Uang	58,76
4	Zakat Penghasilan dan Jasa	139,07
5	Zakat Perusahaan	144,5*
	Total Potensi Zakat	327,6

Two principal institutional models coexist in the collection of zakat in Indonesia. The first is the government-mandated model, represented by BAZNAS, a statutory non-structural government agency responsible for the collection, management, and distribution of zakat at the national, provincial, district, and village levels — the last through its network of Zakat Collection Units (Unit Pengumpul Zakat, UPZ). The second is the independent-institution model, represented by Amil Zakat Institutions (Lembaga Amil Zakat, LAZ), civil-society organizations that operate under BAZNAS's regulatory oversight but retain considerable operational independence, particularly in fundraising and public communication.

Zakat management in Indonesia encompasses two core functions: collection (penghimpunan) and utilization or distribution (pendayagunaan) of zakat funds. Collection is carried out by BAZNAS at the national and regional levels, including thro ugh UPZ units that extend down to the village level across the country, as well as by the network of LAZ institutions. The coexistence of a state zakat body and independent civil-society zakat institutions is, in principle, a source of institutional strength: it broadens the collection infrastructure, gives muzakki a choice of channels through which to discharge their obligation, and on the distribution side allows a wider and more differentiated reach into mustahik communities. This dual structure can, in turn, make both collection and distribution more competitive and, ideally, more efficient. Given that BAZNAS holds a stronger statutory authority and a more extensive administrative hierarchy than LAZ institutions, it is reasonable to expect BAZNAS to achieve the highest levels of performance in both collection and distribution a benchmark against which its actual communication performance can be usefully assessed.

Factors Influencing Zakat Collection

The literature and institutional practice point to two broad clusters of factors that shape the volume and consistency of zakat collection. **Internal factors** include the quality of institutional management, the competence and professionalism of human resources (amil), the sophistication of information systems, and central to this study the quality of public communication in zakat governance. **External factors** include government policy (including fiscal incentives such as the recognition of zakat payments as a deduction from taxable income), macroeconomic conditions, and the general level of public awareness regarding the religious and social obligation of zakat. These factors do not operate independently; institutional communication quality mediates how effectively BAZNAS translates favorable external conditions such as a supportive policy environment — into an actual increase in collected funds.

Several specific constraints continue to limit zakat collection in Indonesia. First, weak public awareness of, and engagement with, digital communication channels for zakat payment through official institutions. Second, a persistent cultural pattern of direct, person-to-person zakat distribution that bypasses formal amil institutions altogether, reducing the funds that pass through and are recorded by BAZNAS and LAZ. Third, gaps in service quality, ease of payment, literacy, and innovation in fundraising methods. Fourth, uneven transparency and accountability practices across the zakat institutional landscape, which affect muzakki confidence in a manner directly comparable to trust dynamics documented in the corporate and public sectors more broadly.

As Rahman (2021) argues, transparency in the digital communication of zakat-managing institutions functions not merely as a technological add-on, but as the foundational basis for rebuilding muzakki trust. This argument resonates with a wider body of research on digital zakat governance: recent institutional case studies show that zakat organizations implementing structured digital reporting systems and standardized digital-readiness instruments are better positioned to demonstrate accountability to their donor base and regulators alike (see, for example, the discussion of BAZNAS's Digital Zakat Index, IKDZ, in Section 2). Field-level studies further corroborate this pattern: an in-depth qualitative study of BAZNAS Ponorogo Regency found that the implementation of digital zakat practices consistent with sharia-economic-law principles trust, transparency, justice, and benefit was reflected in stronger accountability reporting, greater information disclosure, and increased community participation, even as digital literacy gaps and insufficient technical regulation continued to constrain full optimization (Journal of Sharia Economic Law, 2025).

The integration of digital platforms with a coherent communication governance framework at BAZNAS has been shown to improve the efficiency of fund collection while simultaneously strengthening public accountability (Pramanik & Hidayat, 2022). In parallel, digital communication strategies that draw on artificial-intelligence-enabled targeting and social media outreach have been found to extend the reach of zakat literacy campaigns, particularly among the millennial and Gen-Z segments of the Muslim population (Firmansyah et al., 2023). This is consistent with independent research on BAZNAS's fintech engagement, which documents how the agency has progressively adapted its collection infrastructure to the expectations of digitally native donors (Hudaefi et al., 2020).

Research Gap

Despite this growing body of work, comprehensive scholarship examining BAZNAS's digital communication governance as a coherent, multi-dimensional system rather than as an isolated set of tactics — remains scarce. This study seeks to address that gap through a governance and public-communication-performance lens. Prior research on zakat and public communication has tended to develop along three largely separate tracks:

- Zakat studies have concentrated on governance structures and financial accountability, often using frameworks such as Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) to measure institutional efficiency (see, e.g., comparative efficiency studies of Indonesian and Malaysian zakat institutions).
- Communication studies have concentrated on media relations and campaign strategy, generally without engaging deeply with the specific governance obligations of a statutory public body such as BAZNAS.
- Digital-media studies have concentrated on engagement metrics and content performance, often treating "digital" as a delivery channel rather than as a governance architecture in its own right.

This study integrates these three tracks by treating digital communication as a governance function one that is judged not only by reach or engagement, but by its contribution to transparency, accountability, and institutional legitimacy.

A substantial body of prior research links the quality of a zakat institution's public communication to the level of trust it commands among muzakki. Putri (2021) found that BAZNAS's public communication strategy has a significant effect on strengthening muzakki trust, showing that the publication of activity reports, distribution reports, and active interaction on social media enhance the institution's perceived legitimacy. This finding is consistent with broader organizational-communication research showing that visible, regularly updated reporting functions as a trust-building signal independent of the underlying financial performance it describes.

Syafira (2020), examining the transparency of information disseminated by amil zakat institutions through social media, concluded that the *quality* of informative content such as financial reports and program-progress updates is more effective in building public trust than posting frequency alone. This distinction between communication *volume* and communication *substance* recurs throughout the literature and is directly relevant to the present study's emphasis on message clarity and accuracy as distinct dimensions of communication performance.

Wahab and Rahman (2011) examined the efficiency and governance of zakat institutions in Malaysia and developed an analytical framework for assessing zakat-institution governance, arguing that accountability, transparency, and oversight form the foundation of quality zakat-fund management. Their framework remains among the most widely cited in comparative zakat-governance scholarship and provides an important reference point for the present study's own governance-communication framework.

Huda et al. (2014) found that muzakki trust is shaped by transparency, amil competence, and institutional credibility factors that are, in large part, mediated by an institution's public communication and governance practices. Ramadhani (2022), examining the role of public communication in strengthening zakat-institution accountability, found that the provision of feedback channels, openness of reporting, and digital public engagement are critical to reinforcing public trust. Mahat et al. (2018) similarly highlight that good governance combined with effective publicity increases public trust in zakat institutions, an effect that operates substantially through the perception of transparency.

Table 2. Summary of Prior Studies on Zakat Communication and Governance

No.	Researcher(s) & Year	Research Title	Method	Key Findings	Relevance to This Study
1	Putri (2021)	BAZNAS Public Communication Strategy in Increasing Muzakki Trust	Qualitative	Communication strategy, activity publicity, and reporting increase public trust	Establishes the link between public communication and trust
2	Syafira (2020)	Transparency of LAZ Information	Content analysis & interviews	Content quality matters more than posting	Highlights the role of digital media in transparency

No.	Researcher(s) & Year	Research Title	Method	Key Findings	Relevance to This Study
		through Social Media		quantity in building trust	
3	Ramadhani (2022)	Public Communication and Accountability of Zakat Institutions	Qualitative	Openness of reporting and feedback mechanisms increase accountability	Links public communication to governance
4	Wahab & Rahman (2011)	A Framework to Analyze Governance of Zakat Institutions	Conceptual & empirical	Develops a framework of governance efficiency and accountability	Provides a theoretical basis for governance indicators
5	Huda et al. (2014)	Factors Affecting Trust in Zakat Institutions	Quantitative	Transparency and amil credibility influence trust	Explains trust as a key mediating variable
6	Mahat et al. (2018)	Public Trust toward Zakat Institutions	Quantitative	Publicity and good governance increase public trust	Links communication, governance, and trust

Research Focus, Problem Statement, and Objectives

The research focus of this study is the governance of public communication, encompassing four interrelated dimensions:

1. Transparency of zakat information (regarding programs, collection, distribution, and reporting);
2. Public participation in communication (feedback, aspirations, and engagement);
3. Accountability of communication (openness of reporting, mechanisms for information delivery); and
4. Effectiveness of the institution’s public communication strategy (media, messaging, and channels).

The central research problem may be stated as follows: How is public communication governance practiced in BAZNAS’s management of zakat in 2025, in relation to efforts to increase the collection and utilization of zakat funds ? Correspondingly, the objective of this research is to analyze BAZNAS’s public communication practices in the governance of zakat collection and distribution, using the Public Communication Performance Theory as the primary analytical lens.

Significance of the Study

This study is expected to contribute in three ways. Academically, it extends the application of Public Communication Performance Theory developed primarily within Western public-administration and organizational-communication scholarship to the distinctive institutional and religious context of a national zakat agency, thereby testing the theory's cross-cultural and cross-sectoral applicability. Practically, it offers BAZNAS and comparable zakat institutions a structured diagnostic framework for evaluating and improving their digital communication governance. Socially, it contributes to a wider public conversation about how faith-based public institutions can strengthen transparency and public trust in an era of rapid digital transformation, at a moment when Indonesia's national zakat collection has grown substantially from roughly IDR 10.2 trillion in 2019 to approximately IDR 18.9 trillion in 2024 placing correspondingly greater public and regulatory attention on the institutional communication that accompanies this growth.

Research Methodology

1. Research Type and Approach

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case-study design. The governance of public communication is a complex social process, involving actors, messages, media, and public perception, making it more appropriately analyzed in depth through qualitative methods rather than through a purely quantitative or statistical approach. A case-study design is particularly well suited to this study because it allows the researcher to examine BAZNAS's communication governance holistically, within its actual institutional and digital context, rather than isolating individual communication variables from the setting in which they operate.

2. Data Sources

The data used in this research comprise both primary and secondary sources. **Primary data** consist of interviews and field observation of BAZNAS's communication practices and institutional actors. **Secondary data** consist of relevant documents, including BAZNAS's annual reports, quarterly financial reports, audit reports, and published performance data, as well as institutional publications from BAZNAS's research and statistics unit (PUSKAS BAZNAS) and comparable zakat-sector publications .

3. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out through three complementary techniques:

1. **Semi-structured interviews**, allowing the researcher to explore participants' perspectives on BAZNAS's communication governance while retaining sufficient flexibility to probe emergent themes not anticipated in advance.
2. **Participatory/passive observation** of BAZNAS's communication activities, including its public-facing digital channels, reporting practices, and public engagement events.
3. **Documentation**, encompassing the systematic collection and review of institutional reports, policy documents, and digital-communication artifacts (website content, social media posts, published dashboards).

4. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis follows the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, comprising three interrelated stages:

- **Data condensation:** selecting, simplifying, and organizing the raw data gathered from interviews, observation, and documentation into analyzable units aligned with the study's six communication-performance dimensions.
- **Data display:** organizing condensed data into structured formats — including comparative matrices such as those presented in Sections 2 and 5 — that make patterns and relationships visible.
- **Conclusion drawing and verification:** developing interpretive conclusions regarding BAZNAS's communication-governance performance, iteratively checked against the data as analysis proceeds, and revised where new data warrant.

5. Data Validity (Trustworthiness)

To strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applies three complementary validity techniques:

1. **Source triangulation**, drawing on the perspectives of zakat managers (amil), muzakki (zakat payers), and mustahik (zakat recipients), so that no single stakeholder group's perspective dominates the analysis.

2. **Method triangulation**, cross-checking findings obtained through interviews, observation, and documentation against one another.
3. **Member checking**, in which findings are confirmed with informants to verify that the researcher's interpretation accurately reflects participants' intended meaning.

6. Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Consistent with standard qualitative research practice, informants' participation is voluntary and their identities are protected in reporting where sensitive institutional information is discussed. As with any qualitative case study, the findings of this research are context-bound: they describe BAZNAS's communication governance as observed during the study period and should not be generalized without qualification to LAZ institutions, to BAZNAS's regional offices, or to zakat institutions in other national contexts, although the analytical framework itself is designed to be transferable to those settings. A further limitation, common to document-and-observation-based q ualitative designs, is that the researcher's access to internal deliberative processes (as opposed to their public communication outputs) is necessarily partial; the analysis in Section 5 should therefore be read as an assessment of BAZNAS's public-facing communication performance rather than a complete audit of its internal governance processes.

THEORETICAL BASS

Digital Transformation in Zakat Institutions: The Indonesian Context

Beyond the communication-and-trust literature reviewed above, a growing stream of research addresses the digital transformation of zakat institutions specifically. A longitudinal study of BAZNAS's digitalization process (covering 2019–2020) found that the agency had begun formulating a coherent digitalization concept even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling it to move programs into the digital realm quickly once the pandemic accelerated demand for contactless payment and remote engagement. A key finding of this line of research is BAZNAS's strategic application of the AISAS communication model (Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share), which structures the donor journey from initial awareness to active, repeated participation. Under this model, digital platforms including Instagram, TikTok, and the official BAZNAS website serve a dual function: they are promotional tools, but they are equally vital instruments of transparency and community engagement through real-time reporting. This body of research frames digital fundraising not as a narrowly technical adjustment, but as a broader shift in organizational culture and governance.

This diagnosis is reinforced by BAZNAS's own institutional instrumentation. In partnership with Bank Indonesia, BAZNAS developed the Digital Zakat Index (Indeks Kematangan Digital Zakat, IKDZ), a nationally validated instrument used to assess the digital capacity of Zakat Management Organizations (Organisasi Pengelola Zakat, OPZ) across Indonesia's regions and to inform policy directions for strengthening zakat governance under contemporary digital conditions. The existence of a validated, institution-wide digital-maturity instrument is itself evidence that BAZNAS's leadership treats digital communication governance as a measurable organizational capability rather than an incidental activity a premise this study adopts and builds upon.

Field-level evidence supports the broader thesis that digital transformation strengthens but does not by itself guarantee governance quality. A qualitative case study of BAZNAS Ponorogo Regency, based on in-depth interviews with institutional management, observation, and documentation, found that digital-zakat implementation aligned with sharia-economic-law principles of trust, transparency, justice, and benefit, and that good-governance principles were reflected in strengthened accountability reporting, greater information disclosure, and expanded community participation. At the same time, the study identified persistent constraints: limited digital literacy within parts of the community and insufficient technical regulation, both of which limited the full optimization of digital zakat governance.

A separate multi-institution study covering BAZNAS, Dompet Dhuafa, and Rumah Zakat (2019–2024) drawing on a systematic review of twenty-three institutional reports and peer-reviewed sources found that digital zakat platforms significantly increased muzakki participation, particularly among millennial and urban donors, coinciding with national zakat collection growth from approximately IDR 10.2 trillion in 2019 to approximately IDR 18.9 trillion in 2024. The same body of research reports that BAZNAS's own 2023 annual data show a substantial rise on the order of 78 percent in public trust among muzakki who engage with institutions that provide digital reporting and regular activity updates, and further links digital marketing and public communication through social media channels to the strengthening of positive institutional image, particularly among younger donors. This finding provides an important empirical anchor for the present study's central proposition: that communication performance and fund-collection performance are mutually reinforcing rather than independent outcomes.

More recent research has begun to examine the frontier of BAZNAS's digital governance specifically, the integration of artificial intelligence into national zakat administration through systems such as SmartZiswaf. This research assesses the extent to which AI strengthens national zakat governance across three dimensions: digital accountability, reporting transparency, and equitable distribution, and situates SmartZiswaf as a strategic initiative through which BAZNAS seeks to increase public trust and optimize technology-based zakat-fund management. While this frontier of AI-enabled governance lies beyond the immediate scope of the present study, it signals a governance trajectory from digital reporting toward algorithmically supported accountability against which BAZNAS's current communication performance can usefully be benchmarked.

Complementary research on big-data applications at the regional level (BAZNAS Riau) similarly concludes that big-data capability holds significant potential to improve the accuracy of zakat-potential mapping, optimize both fundraising and distribution, and strengthen transparency and accountability through publicly accessible, real-time digital reporting while cautioning that realizing this potential depends on strengthening technological infrastructure, human-resource competency, and data-system integration.

International Comparative Perspectives on Zakat Governance

Comparative research situates BAZNAS's governance challenges within a broader regional pattern. Malaysia's zakat system is decentralized, with each state's zakat authority (such as Lembaga Zakat Selangor) exercising full institutional authority over collection and distribution; this arrangement enables strong responsiveness to local conditions but has also been associated with weaker national coordination and disparities in transparency and efficiency across states. Singapore, by contrast, operates the most centralized and professionalized model in the region through the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), which is regulated under the Administration of Muslim Law Act and supported by modern digital-payment infrastructure achieving high collection efficiency despite Muslims constituting a comparatively small share of the national population. Indonesia's own model has been characterized as hybrid, combining governmental oversight (through BAZNAS, under Law No. 23 of 2011) with continued private-sector and civil-society involvement through LAZ institutions an arrangement that seeks to balance regulatory control with local adaptability, but which comparative researchers note continues to face coordination and public-trust challenges relative to more centralized systems.

A parallel comparative literature examines institutional efficiency using Data Envelopment Analysis, finding that both Indonesian and Malaysian zakat institutions exhibit uneven efficiency and stability over time, with accountability, transparency, and public trust particularly in increasingly digitalized zakat systems identified as key factors shaping zakat's capacity to function effectively alongside taxation as a complementary fiscal and welfare instrument. This comparative evidence reinforces a central premise of the present study: that BAZNAS's institutional advantage in statutory authority does not, by itself, translate into superior communication or governance performance, and that the digital communication layer is where much of this potential advantage is either realized or lost.

Theoretical Antecedents of Public Communication Performance

The theoretical framework adopted in this study Public Communication Performance Theory synthesizes several established strands of communication and public-relations theory, each of which contributes a distinct conceptual lens relevant to the analysis of BAZNAS's digital communication governance.

Robert T. Craig's (1999) foundational essay on communication theory as a field argues that communication should not be reduced to a transmission model the simple conveyance of a message from sender to receiver but should instead be understood as a constitutive social practice through which shared meaning, relationships, and institutional legitimacy are actively built. This constitutive view underlies the present study's treatment of BAZNAS's communication not as a support function for fundraising, but as a governance practice in its own right.

Developed by James E. Grunig and colleagues through a decade-long, IABC-funded research program, Excellence Theory specifies the conditions under which public relations and organizational communication contribute most to organizational effectiveness. The theory identifies symmetrical, two-way communication characterized by dialogue, feedback, and mutual adjustment between an organization and its publics as a defining feature of excellent communication practice, alongside the strategic integration of the communication function into organizational decision-making and an explicit ethical orientation toward transparency and accountability. Excellence Theory's emphasis on symmetry provides a direct conceptual bridge to this study's *Responsiveness* and *Participation* dimensions.

Kent and Taylor's (2002) dialogic theory of public relations extends the symmetrical-communication tradition by centering the concept of dialogue itself arguing that ethical, relationship-building communication requires organizations to create genuine opportunities for stakeholder voice, rather than simply broadcasting messages through nominally "interactive" digital channels. Subsequent research applying dialogic principles to organizational social-media practice has found that situational constraints frequently prevent organizations from realizing the theory's normative ideal in practice a caution directly relevant to evaluating whether BAZNAS's social-media engagement constitutes genuine dialogue or merely the appearance of it.

Developed by W. Timothy Coombs, SCCT provides a structured framework for aligning an organization's crisis-response strategy with the type of crisis, its history, and the level of responsibility publics are likely to attribute to the organization. Central to SCCT is the finding that open, information-forward communication reduces public uncertainty and helps protect institutional reputation, and that digital communication channels and transparency have become increasingly important determinants of successful crisis containment and the preservation of public trust in recent research. SCCT informs this study's sixth analytical dimension, *Issue and Crisis Management*.

Building on these organizational-communication foundations, public-sector communication scholarship notably the work synthesized by Canel and Luoma-aho (2019) and by Heath and Johansen (2020) extends these private-sector-originated theories to the distinctive accountability obligations of public institutions, which communicate not to a voluntary customer base but to citizens and stakeholders with a formal, often statutory, claim on institutional transparency. BAZNAS, as a non-structural government agency managing religiously mandated public funds, sits precisely at this intersection: it is bound by the transparency expectations of public-sector governance, while also carrying the trust obligations distinctive to a faith-based philanthropic institution.

Alan McKee's (2017) work on social and behavior change communication contributes a further, complementary dimension: the recognition that communication quality should be evaluated not only by its formal properties (clarity, accuracy) but by its demonstrated capacity to produce behavioral outcomes in BAZNAS's case, the actual payment of zakat through official channels, rather than through informal, untracked distribution.

Taken together, these theoretical antecedents Craig's constitutive model, Grunig's Excellence Theory, Kent and Taylor's dialogic theory, Coombs's SCCT, and the public-sector communication scholarship of Canel, Luoma-aho, Heath, and Johansen converge on the six-dimensional Public Communication Performance framework adopted in this study, discussed in full in Section 3.

Public Communication Performance Theory

In the context of a zakat institution, the performance of digital communication directly shapes institutional legitimacy, public trust, and muzakki compliance. Public Communication Performance Theory positions communication not merely as a channel for transmitting messages (the transmission model), but as a strategic action that determines the legitimacy and success of a public institution.

The theory's roots lie in Robert T. Craig's (1999) conception of communication as discursive social practice (the constitutive model), subsequently developed by Alan McKee (2017) in relation to the evaluation of communication quality in the public sphere, and further enriched by the organizational-communication-performance approach that integrates Excellence Theory, dialogic theory, and crisis-communication scholarship reviewed in Section 2.4. Conceptually, the theory holds that the quality of an institution's public communication performance can be evaluated across six principal dimensions.

The Six Dimensions of Public Communication Performance

1. Clarity

The institution's ability to compose messages that are easily understood, free from technical or bureaucratic jargon, and free of ambiguity for the general public. Information regarding requirements, eligibility, or service procedures is presented in plain, concise language supported by systematically organized visual materials.

2. Accuracy

The correspondence between the message communicated and factual reality, scientific data, official policy, and conditions on the ground, without manipulation or distortion. Announcements of public data, statistics, or crisis-related information must be grounded in verified data in order to prevent disinformation and public alarm.

3. Credibility

The level of public trust in the source of a message (source credibility), shaped by the institution's competence, integrity, and the consistency between its actions and what it communicates. Statements by public officials are supported by a demonstrable track record of transparency and delivered by spokespersons who are recognized as competent in their field.

4. Responsiveness

The speed, accuracy, and empathy with which a public institution responds to questions, complaints, criticism, and public aspirations. Management of customer-service channels, social media, and call centers that provide genuine, interactive feedback and real-time solutions, rather than purely automated or templated (bot) responses.

5. Transparency

The institution's openness in providing access to its decision-making processes, budget allocation, performance achievements, and shortcomings. Publication of financial reports, budget-execution documents, and policy documents on an official portal that citizens can freely access and download.

6. Accessibility of Information

The ease with which all segments of society — including persons with disabilities, the elderly, and communities in remote areas — can reach and make use of public information. Provision of information across multiple platforms (website, print media, social media), screen-reader compatibility for visually impaired users, and the use of sign-language interpretation in official announcements.

Practical Implications for Public Institutions

Table 3. Practical Implications of Communication Performance by Institutional Function

Institutional Function	Form of Communication Performance	Success Indicator
Service	Ease of understanding service procedures	Reduction in complaints caused by procedural confusion
Information	Dissemination of policy and public education	Increased public literacy and awareness
Participation	Space for dialogue and channeling of aspirations	Quantity and quality of citizen input in public consultation
Accountability	Public accounting for performance and budget	Increase in the Public Trust Index

Rationale for Applying the Theory to Zakat Governance

Three features of BAZNAS's institutional position make Public Communication Performance Theory a particularly appropriate analytical lens. First, BAZNAS is a non-structural government agency, meaning it is bound by public-sector accountability norms even though it operates with a degree of institutional flexibility distinct from a conventional ministry. Second, BAZNAS manages funds that are simultaneously public (in the sense of drawing on a wide donor base and requiring public accountability) and religiously mandated (in the sense that mismanagement carries not only administrative but spiritual and reputational consequences within the Muslim community it serves). Third, BAZNAS competes in a soft, non-adversarial sense with the LAZ network for muzakki trust and donations, meaning that communication performance is not simply a compliance obligation but a determinant of institutional competitiveness. These three features jointly justify treating BAZNAS's communication practices as a governance variable worthy of systematic, multi-dimensional evaluation, rather than as an ancillary marketing function.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Relevance of Public Communication Performance Theory to Communication Governance

As a non-structural government agency, BAZNAS is required to implement public communication that is transparent, informative, accountable, and participatory. This requirement has become especially pressing in the 2025 institutional environment, which demands:

- the digitalization of zakat services;
- real-time reporting;

- the strengthening of public trust;
- active management of institutional image; and
- improved performance in both fund collection and distribution.

Each of these five demands maps directly onto one or more of the six communication-performance dimensions introduced in Section 3, providing the analytical structure for the discussion that follows.

2. Dimensions of BAZNAS's Public Communication Performance

1. Clarity and Accuracy of Information

BAZNAS's digital communication performance regarding information on zakat collection and distribution is, on the whole, clear, comprehensible, and free of significant ambiguity. The institution displays real-time reports and a zakat dashboard, and its communication generally avoids the technical Islamic-jurisprudence (fiqh) terminology that could otherwise confuse the general public. Program information for mustahik is presented with a reasonable degree of transparency, covering the type of assistance provided, the selection criteria applied, and the expected outputs of each program.

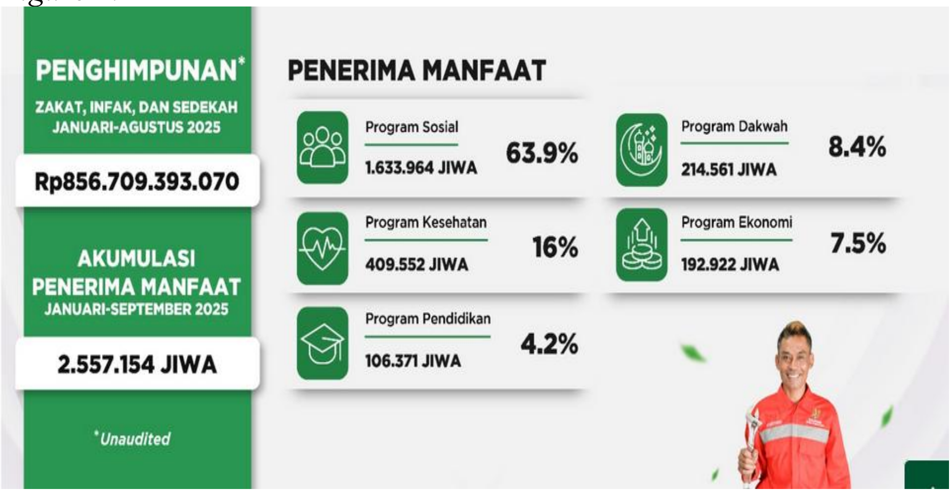
Figure 1.

Nonetheless, clarity and accuracy in a public institution's communication is not a static achievement but a continuous practice: as BAZNAS's program portfolio expands spanning education, health, humanitarian assistance, and da'wah activities integrated with the Sustainable Development Goals, including efforts to address stunting, empower persons with disabilities, and eradicate extreme poverty — the risk of message fragmentation across programs and channels grows correspondingly. Maintaining a single, coherent standard of clarity across an expanding program portfolio therefore represents an ongoing governance challenge rather than a one-time achievement.

2. Transparency and Public Accountability

BAZNAS's digital communication performance in the area of financial and program-reporting disclosure reflects the centrality of digital transparency as a defining public expectation. BAZNAS publishes quarterly reports, audit results, and program-performance data through its website, social media channels, and annual reports. Accountable communication performance of this kind is directly linked, in both the literature reviewed in Section 2 and in BAZNAS's own reported outcomes, to increased muzakki trust — a relationship consistent with the finding that a substantial share of muzakki report greater trust in institutions that provide regular, accessible digital reporting.

Figure 2.



At the same time, the transparency literature draws an important distinction between the *availability* of reports and their *actionability* for an ordinary muzakki without specialized financial literacy. A quarterly report published as a lengthy PDF document, for instance, satisfies a formal transparency obligation but may fail to achieve genuine communicative clarity for the great majority of its intended audience — a gap between formal and substantive transparency that BAZNAS's communication strategy should explicitly address.

3. Responsiveness and Digital Service Delivery

BAZNAS's digital communication performance in responsiveness is charact erized by fast, attentive, two-way service. Public responses on social media platforms (X, Instagram, TikTok) are generally handled in real time, and an integrated digital zakat-complaint service — spanning call center, WhatsApp, and chatbot channels — is in place. Delays in response, however, carry a disproportionate reputational cost: in a public institution managing funds understood by donors to be religiously obligatory, a slow or generic response can create a perception of institutional indifference that undermines trust well beyond the specific incident that triggered the complaint.

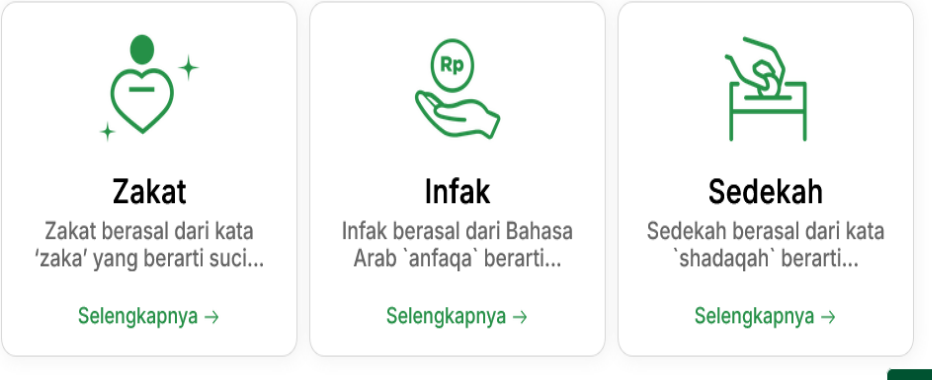
Figure 3.

Responsiveness, understood through the lens of Excellence Theory and dialogic theory (Section 2.4), requires more than rapid acknowledgment: it requires evidence that public input meaningfully informs institutional decisions. Where responses are largely templated or where chatbot interactions cannot escalate to a human amil for substantive queries, the *appearance* of responsiveness can diverge from its *substance* precisely the gap that dialogic theory research has found to be common in organizational social-media practice more broadly.

4. Public Participation and Engagement

BAZNAS's digital communication performance regarding participation is reflected in the extent to which muzakki and mustahik are able to provide input and in the openness of public monitoring. BAZNAS is expected to maintain public discussion forums, satisfaction surveys, and digital participation spaces, and to engage religious figures, influencers, and community networks as part of its engagement strategy.

Figure 4.



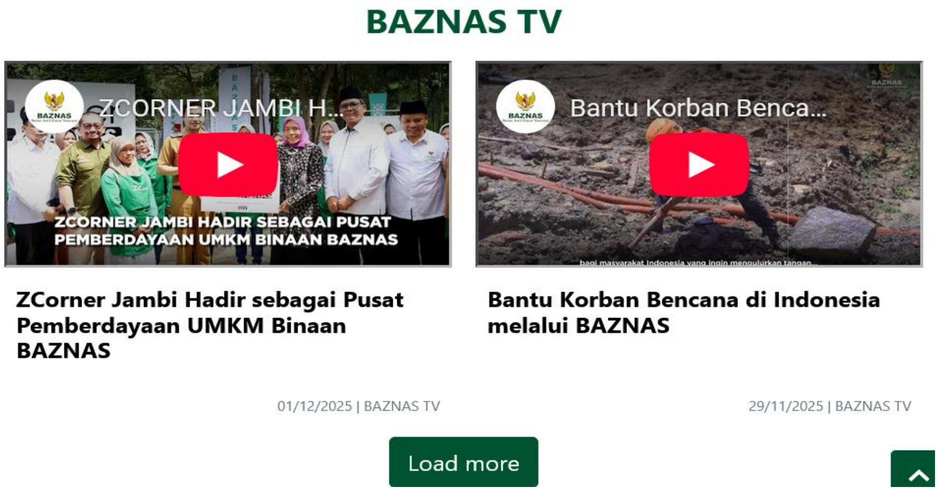
Comparative evidence indicates that public participation in BAZNAS's programs tends to concentrate in particular regions or OPZ units typically large-city BAZNAS offices, areas with a high density of Muslim population, or localities where BAZNAS has pursued intensive digitalization and promotional efforts, such as Bekasi. This uneven geographic distribution of participation is itself a communication-governance finding: it suggests that engagement outcomes are not uniformly determined by national policy alone, but are substantially shaped by the intensity and quality of communication efforts at the regional and local level an important consideration given BAZNAS's UPZ network extends to the village level nationwide, and given Malaysia's decentralized zakat model, discussed in Section 2.3, illustrates both the benefits and the coordination costs of a more regionally autonomous communication approach.

5. Media Orchestration

BAZNAS's digital communication performance in maintaining message consistency across channels requires an integrated communication strategy spanning website, Instagram, TikTok, X, television, radio, and podcast platforms. The zakat message must maintain a consistent brand voice across all channels.

Figure 5.

Figure 6.



Message-orchestration performance is where the tension between BAZNAS's national mandate and its highly decentralized operational footprint becomes most visible. A national headline campaign message must be adapted for a village-level UPZ audience without losing its core meaning, and it must be adapted again for a digitally native, social-media-first younger donor audience all while maintaining the doctrinal and factual accuracy that the *Accuracy* and *Credibility* dimensions demand. Achieving this balance consistently, across a network as large as BAZNAS's, is a substantially harder governance problem than maintaining message consistency within a single national office.

6. Issue and Crisis Management

BAZNAS's digital communication performance in handling negative issues swiftly and appropriately is a critical, if less visible, dimension of institutional legitimacy. Issues involving misdirected fund distribution, hoaxes, or suspicion of corruption must be addressed with data and instant clarification. BAZNAS requires a standard operating procedure for digital crisis communication.

Figure 7.

Applying SCCT's core insight (Section 2.4) to this dimension, the appropriate crisis-response strategy depends on the degree of institutional responsibility the public is likely to attribute to BAZNAS for a given issue. A misdirected-distribution incident traceable to a regional UPZ's administrative error, for example, calls for a different communicative posture grounded in corrective transparency and accountability than a hoax or fabricated allegation with no basis in BAZNAS's actual conduct, which instead calls for rapid, data-based clarification and correction of the misinformation itself. Treating these as a single undifferentiated "negative issue" category risks a mismatched and therefore less effective crisis response.

Model of Digital Communication Performance Analysis

Synthesizing the six dimensions discussed above, this study proposes a six-facet analytical model precision, presentation, participation, public trust, problem response, and performance output to characterize BAZNAS's overall digital communication performance.

Table 4. Model of BAZNAS Digital Communication Performance Analysis

Dimension	Analysis
Precision	BAZNAS's messaging is reasonably well-targeted and accurate, though not yet fully optimized against contemporary public-communication-performance standards. The quality of BAZNAS's messaging is strong in terms of data and Islamic-jurisprudence grounding, but its overall communication strategy still has room for improvement.
Presentation	The quality of BAZNAS's information presentation is generally sound and informative, but still requires improvement in the completeness of data, the consistency of visual identity, and the

Dimension	Analysis
	development of impact-based storytelling. The visual and communicative quality of BAZNAS's presentation of zakat programs is judged to be reasonably good, but requires further strengthening in data completeness, cross-platform consistency, and more measurable presentation of program impact.
Participation	Public participation in BAZNAS programs is substantial and shows an increasing trend, particularly in regions where BAZNAS actively pursues outreach, digitalization, and promotional or image-building efforts. However, this participation tends to concentrate in specific regions or OPZ units — such as BAZNAS offices in major cities, areas with a high density of Muslim population, or localities with intensive zakat-promotion programs — as evidenced by district- and city-level data such as that from Bekasi.
Public Trust	BAZNAS's communication tends to be effective in building public trust when it satisfies four core dimensions: transparency, consistency, accuracy, and responsiveness. However, the effectiveness of this trust-building varies across regions and across communication channels.
Problem Response	The effectiveness of BAZNAS's response can be assessed across four dimensions: responsiveness, accountability, crisis communication, and stakeholder engagement. BAZNAS is reasonably responsive and systematic in addressing public issues or criticism, particularly at the national level, through: rapid response on social media; clarification via press releases; explanation of data and financial reports; SOP-based crisis management; and stakeholder involvement in clarification processes.
Performance Output	Public communication has a significant influence — both theoretically and empirically — on zakat collection and distribution. The more effective BAZNAS's public communication, the greater the volume of collection, and the more accurate and timely the distribution of zakat funds.

Cross-Cutting Discussion: From Communication Performance to Institutional Legitimacy

The six dimensions examined above are analytically distinct but functionally interdependent. Clarity and accuracy establish the informational foundation on which credibility is built; credibility, in turn, determines whether transparency disclosures are believed rather than merely noted; responsiveness and participation convert one-way transparency into the two-way dialogue that Excellence Theory and dialogic theory identify as the hallmark of excellent public communication; and crisis-management performance determines whether accumulated trust survives contact with an adverse event. A weakness in any single dimension therefore has the potential to undermine the returns to strong performance in the others a weak crisis response, for instance, can erode trust built up over years of consistent, transparent reporting.

This interdependence also explains why BAZNAS's institutional advantages its statutory authority, its national UPZ network, and its access to the IKDZ digital-maturity instrument do not automatically translate into communication-governance advantages over the more agile, digitally native LAZ institutions with which it shares the zakat-collection landscape. Institutional authority provides the *capacity* for strong communication performance; it does not, by itself, guarantee the *practice* of it across every regional unit and every digital channel. The uneven, regionally concentrated pattern of public participation identified in Section 5.2.4 is direct evidence of this gap between institutional capacity and realized communication performance.

Recommendations for Strengthening BAZNAS's Digital Communication Governance

Building on the discussion above, this study proposes the following practical directions for strengthening BAZNAS's digital communication governance:

1. **Standardize message clarity across the UPZ network.** Develop a national style and messaging guide, translated into accessible formats for village-level UPZ communicators, to narrow the gap between national campaign messaging and its regional and local adaptation.
2. **Close the gap between formal and substantive transparency.** Complement full financial and audit reports with simplified, visually structured summaries designed for muzakki without specialized financial literacy, consistent with the *Accessibility* dimension of the communication-performance framework.
3. **Strengthen the substantive quality of digital responsiveness.** Establish clear escalation pathways from chatbot and templated responses to human amil for substantive complaints, and track response quality — not only response speed — as a formal institutional metric.
4. **Extend participation infrastructure beyond high-density regions.** Use the IKDZ digital-maturity instrument not only to assess regional OPZ capacity but to prioritize investment in digital

communication infrastructure and training in regions where participation currently lags.

5. **Differentiate crisis-response protocols by attributed responsibility.** Develop SCCT-informed standard operating procedures that distinguish between issues arising from genuine institutional error (requiring corrective transparency) and issues arising from misinformation (requiring rapid, evidence-based rebuttal).
6. **Institutionalize impact-based storytelling.** Move beyond activity-based reporting (what was done) toward outcome-based reporting (what changed for mustahik as a result), addressing the "impact-based storytelling" gap identified in the Presentation dimension of Table 4.

These recommendations are offered as directions for institutional consideration and further empirical testing, consistent with the qualitative, case-study character of this research; they are not presented as a validated implementation roadmap, which would require the kind of primary field data additional interviews, regional comparative observation that lies beyond the scope of the present study and is identified in Section 4.6 as a direction for future research.

CONCLUSION

Public Communication Performance Theory provides a robust conceptual framework for assessing the quality of BAZNAS's digital communication governance. Viewed through the lens of communication performance, zakat management is understood not merely as an administrative and distributive activity, but as a public-communication process that demands transparency, informational accuracy, responsiveness, public participation, and message consistency.

As a state institution entrusted with the management of public funds, BAZNAS must demonstrate a high standard of communication performance in order to build muzakki trust, strengthen its institutional legitimacy, and ensure good-governance practice in the national management of zakat. Strong communication performance has a direct bearing on public perception, on the effectiveness of zakat collection, and on the success of mustahik empowerment programs.

In 2025 a period in which digitalization, data openness, and the speed of information have become the new standard for public service Public Communication Performance Theory affirms that BAZNAS must be able to manage its communication professionally across all six of the dimensions examined in this study: clarity, accuracy, credibility, responsiveness, transparency, and accessibility of information.

By applying the principles embedded in this theory, BAZNAS's public communication governance can operate more effectively, more accountably, and with a stronger orientation toward the needs of the community it serves thereby strengthening BAZNAS's role as Indonesia's trusted and relevant national zakat-management institution in the era of 2025 digital transformation.

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