

## ZAKAT MODEL FOR COUNTERING THE ADVERSE IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON INDIVIDUALS IN BAUCHI STATE NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*The current menace of COVID-19 pandemic has already impacted almost each and every one across the globe directly or indirectly. The focus of world leaders and economist has now shifted from spread of the disease to the economic consequences which will bring hardship to the society in general and individuals in particular. The menace of the pandemic resulted shortage of production which will result into the shortage of supply and consequently will end as loss of jobs and employment for millions of individuals around the globe. The most important group of people to be considered in our society during any crisis are daily wage earners who will have to bear the major burnt of this crisis. The proposed integrated Model of collecting and distributing Zakat can help the government agencies and economic institutions to minimize the adverse impact of COVID-19 pandemic on individuals in Bauchi State Nigeria. The present study explores the possibility of Zakat as a financing method to fight the adverse impact of COVID-19 pandemic on poor individuals in the society. It provides the solution by proposing an Islamic Model of collecting Zakat and its well distribution. The qualitative approach which include review of related literatures and interview with relevant bodies on personnel's have been adopted in the study. While inductive approach of thematic analysis was utilized for data analysis. The findings of the study reveal that Zakat as an Islamic finance model have immense potential to fight any kind of situation and pandemic in respect of location, era, people or religion. Zakat, if properly collected, well managed and accurately distributed can help to fight the adverse effect of COVID-19 pandemic on individuals in the study area. Practical Implications to be used as an effective way to support poor individuals during and after the period of COVID-19 pandemic in Bauchi State Nigeria. The study will contribute massively to the existing literature and will help the government, religious organizations and civil societies in fighting the economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic on individuals in Bauchi State, Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *adverse, bauchi, COVID-19, individual, model, zakat.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The start of the 21st decade and first quarter of 2020 has seen everything in terms of fear, rumors, reliable and fake news that lastly exposed the emergence of this deadly virus of COVID-19 pandemic. It started with the rumors and fear to real global pandemic (COVID-19) which pushed and paralyses the global economy. COVID-19 is a new kind of Corona virus which was not found previously in our countries. The main source of this virus is still unknown but considering the previous experiences it must have transferred to the human from animals as claimed by some researchers. Actually, it is a large family of disease that has common symptoms like, normal cold, flu and cough to more severe disease like 'Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome' (SARS).

With every passing hour the adverse impact of this global and deadly pandemic Corona virus (COVID-19) is increasing multifarious. Within just few months after the first case detected in Wuhan city of China, the economic impact of this crisis is already being compared with the global financial crisis of 2007/2008 and great depression of 1930s. Just for the comparison the financial crisis of 2007/2008 lasted for more than 3 years (Erken, 2012) where as great depression of 1930s lasted for around a decade (Romer, 1990).

With economies in lock down, closing shops, borders, people being asked to stay indoors and economic activities are nearly to be halt, the global economy left in shambles and looking less healthy. The stock markets are tumbling, central banks are slashing interest rate, industrial production are almost zero resulting into massive job loss and a financial crisis is around the corner. As the reality of this pandemic is daily emerging, but the amount of the damage cause by it will largely depend on the amount of corrective actions the government and employers take today to minimize the damage among the poor individuals in affected areas.

## **ORIGIN, SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

The COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) which was its first case found in Wuhan, China has been becoming a global diseases issue. This virus has been reported widespread rapidly since the beginning of first quarter 2020. The issue of corona virus was started from the reported case of the unknown pneumonia in Wuhan, China in December 2019. Pneumonia normally is a disease that affect the lungs which can be caused by bacteria or viruses with typical symptoms such as fever, coughing, chest pain and later result hard breathing. The disease can be investigated normally by x-ray diagnosis and the bacteria can be assessed from the result of the investigation. In the recent Wuhan pneumonia case in December 2019, COVID-19 was then confirmed as the cause of the disease that has the potential to cause death (Musa, 2021).

The coronavirus entered Nigeria through an infected Italian citizen who came in contact with a Nigerian citizen who was subsequently infected with the coronavirus. The coronavirus then spread to other citizens in Lagos and to other parts of the country including Bauchi State (Muhammad, 2020).

According to Nigerian National Center for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), the pre-symptoms of COVID-19 can appear within 1 - 2 weeks after the suspected person is uncovered to the deadly virus (NCDC, 2020). The early and common symptoms of COVID-19 covers fever, coughing, abnormal sneezing and hard-breathing as well as chest pain (NCDC, 2020). A person that is confirmed infected with COVID-19 virus would experience mild symptoms of severe pain or even death (NCDC, 2020).

NCDC officials explains the spread of COVID-19 can occur from a person to another by close contact, Mass gatherings, improper sanitization, etc. It is furthermore states that, the person-to-person spread is approximately happening through respiratory sucks which emerge when people who are infected with COVID-19, cough or sneeze openly without protection and then landed in the mouth or nose of people who are nearby the person, and hence may be inhaled into the lungs of people around the infected COVID-19, this transmission is quite similar to the transmission of influenza and other respiratory parasitic microorganisms (NCDC, 2020).

To detect someone that is affected by COVID-19 virus, steps are to be taking in a series of medical laboratory tests which are needed for the people who are suspected for having contracted with COVID-19. In regard to these medical laboratory tests to detect COVID-19 affected persons, the NCDC highlight the following series of tests are to be done before the issuance of final results.

1. Sorting the entire genome and the NAAT test (Nucleoid Acid Amplification Test) if available for sample type of the "lower respiratory tract and upper respiratory tract" which to be conducted by medical laboratory experts, samples are taken at the time of inspection. This test is taken during the examination of the sample. To confirm the person being free of viruses, the sample collection was repeated several times until the results are negative in two sequential samples.
2. Serology test for the sample type of the "Serum – Serological testing" if the NAAT test is not available which to be conducted too by medical laboratory experts. The paired sample is needed to confirm the initial sample collected in the first week and ideally the second sample is taken 3 - 4 weeks later. If only one serum sample can be taken from a patient, the sample must be taken at least 3-4 weeks after the onset of symptoms to determine the likelihood of the patient contracting a COVID-19 case.

NCDC by the directives of Federal government of Nigeria has established, built, and developed a new laboratory test centers across the country to test specimens of patients that are suspected of being infected with Covid-19 virus. This test centers are attached with isolation centers for giving a first aid to the patients where Bauchi State is one of the first state to get such centers in the Northern part of the country.

For the prevention of COVID-19 pandemic at the individual level to the whole community, several sources from health organizations and NCDC in Nigeria suggest the following methods:

- i. Avoiding close contact with the people affected with Covid-19 virus.
- ii. Avoiding touching mouth, eyes or nose before washing hands.
- iii. Staying at home for having sick not to attend gatherings.
- iv. Covering face when coughing or sneezing with a tissue or cloth, then throw it to the trash.
- v. Cleaning objects that are frequently touched by hands through using washing detergents.
- vi. Regular use of face mask by individuals.
- vii. Always wash your hand regularly with soap and water or hand sanitizer after number of seconds, especially after eating, and after coughing, or sneezing.
- viii. Contacting a doctor if you have a fever, cough, and hard breath after returning from a foreign trip.

### **IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON POOR INDIVIDUALS IN BAUCHI STATE NIGERIA**

Though the death toll and number of infected people from COVID-19 are mainly from the world's most developed countries like, U.S., Italy, Spain, Germany, China and UK which are increasing every day till ends of October last year. It has severely affected the world's most developed countries despite their best health care systems and other infrastructural facilities. The impact of this crisis is projected to be worse in underdeveloped and unindustrialized countries due to lack of adequate testing facilities, lack of accurate data and because of patients might have pre-existing conditions. The ongoing global pandemic will still hit hard the individuals who are poor and daily wage laborers in these countries as it is estimated that large number of hundreds million less privileged people will fall unknowingly in to high risk level of poverty due to this pandemic (World Bank, 2020). Here in this paper we will not talk about the number of death or measures to cure the infected patients.

Always countries with high poverty rates and weak governance as well as institutions are the one suffering a short- and long-term socio-economic impacts from COVID-19. They may find it difficult to provide a good and

standard healthcare and other basic services, and during crises these fragile systems can collapse (Diwakar, 2020).

Our focus will be beyond the number of infections and death, we will analyze the economic impact of this pandemic on individuals and how we can use Islamic financial model of Zakat as a tool to fight and minimize the damage of this virus on more especially poor individuals of the society in the study area. Few years before the period of COVID-19 pandemic most of the world economy have achieved the high level of development due to the contribution from SMEs, for example, Taiwan, China and Japan have achieved high industrial growth due to the contribution from their dynamic SMEs (Pandya, 2012).

SMEs provided the valuable inputs to the society in terms of contribution in GDP, generating employment, providing goods for the local demand and adjusting the quality of goods and services as per the local demand. Nigeria in general and Bauchi State in particular witnessed this kind of economic development through SMEs and in Agricultural sector more especially in dry season farming programs which includes rice farming, tomato farming, potato farming, onion and carrot farming, wheat farming, cassava farming and many more which are mostly take place in northern part of Bauchi State which contributed with more than 40% rate of seasonal employment among youths before the advent of COVID-19 pandemic in early year of 2020 (Barakatu, 2021).

Oxfam-a Nairobi based charity organization published a report on April 10, 2020 and their findings revealed that this is going to be an economic crisis more severe than the financial crisis of 2008. The global poverty is expected to increase for the first time in 30 years after 1990 (Haider, 2020).

Considering the above statistics and scenario, there is very indications and probability that the situation is expected to get worse, and the simple way it can be improved is that, the rich people and government around the world should come together and join hands to help these deprived section of society (Barakatu 2021).

Islamic finance has certain number of beautiful tools in fighting and eradicating poverty or reducing hardship among individuals which include collection and distribution of Zakat to help vulnerable individuals in this pandemic situation. If the Islamic finance tools are used effectively with the technology particularly Zakat, the Muslim communities can save their poor individuals. (Adam, 2020).

Musa (2021) identifies that during the period of COVID-19 the rate of risk of humanitarian crises and disasters, including pandemics and poverty in Bauchi State is something need to get urgent consideration. Some of these problems includes access to improved water and sanitation, business activities, farming and rearing, daily labor activities, political and security risk, socio-

economic flexibility, infrastructural adequacy, and access to standard healthcare.

In the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the international, national, local and non-governmental bodies focus should be on communities with inadequate standard health systems and highest rates of poverty and mortality in order to reduce the outbreak of the pandemics and to ensure that poverty does not deepen in these communities (Yusuf, 2021).

The individuals who are living in poverty and informal settlements have limited access to basic services in their life such as not able to attend work places regularly, difficulties or dangerous access to food stuffs, high population in the communities that makes it difficult to practice the social distancing advised giving by government officials and health experts during the period of COVID-19. Many individuals living in a place where difficulties for water supply or its shortages does permit regular hand washing and suffers from few and standard public toilets or water points (Barakatu, 2021).

School closures disrupt learning for poor children and those who are unable to use distance learning tools in Bauchi State communities, and some available and existing schools lack the capacity to offer the educational needs of the masses. Many children of poor individuals may miss school meals due to closures of public schools that are running the government feeding programs as a result of COVID-19 pandemic outbreak (Yusuf, 2021).

These factors could increase food insecurity, life insecurity, educational insecurity, economic insecurity and social insecurity which are always contributing in creating the gaps between the upper and middle class among individuals.

Many aged individuals within Bauchi communities are at increased risk of illness if they contract COVID-19 virus, and also easily to be victims of other sources of ill-health due to their weaker immune systems and sensitive risk of poverty which leads to mass death of ill poor individuals in the middle of year 2020. The international, national and local responses should primarily consider the disparity impacts of COVID-19 on individuals more especially the poor and women as well as aged people needs special needs of care compared to men and middle-aged people (Yusuf, 2021).

### **ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF ZAKAT**

The word zakat means purification. Our possessions are purified when we give a proportion for those in need and this act of giving balances and encourages new growth in our economy (Adam, 2020). Zakat is an Islamic finance term referring to the obligation that an individual has to donate a certain proportion of his wealth each year to charitable causes.

Zakat is a religious obligation ordering all Muslims who meet the necessary criteria to donate certain portion of his wealth in due time to an identified person, it is based on income and value of possessions (Adam, 2020).

Therefore, the basic purpose of zakat is to maintain economic balance in society so that circulation of wealth continues from rich to poor and never stay in one hand (Ali, 2014).. In this way we can overcome poverty and other social evils in our society.

## **ECONOMIC STATUS OF INDIVIDUALS IN BAUCHI STATE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS**

The COVID-19 pandemic generally affected the global economy internally and externally in different ways which includes the spread of the virus which encouraged social distancing that led to the partial and total shutdown and lockdown of financial institutions, market places, government and private offices, businesses and events centers, schools, travel agencies that led to bad situation in safety consumption and investment among consumers and investors (Yusuf, 2021).

With corona virus diseases, many communities even in the developing countries and especially in the African continent where poverty and illiteracy are taking their base, poor individuals are going to face long-term consequences ranging from internal and external disruption of their economy. The COVID-19 pandemic is a real threat to all type of livelihood for all over the world not only Nigeria at large or Bauchi State in particular, but it is most devastating when it would carry further deterioration to those mostly on living below any economic, social, health and educational services.

The poorest communities may experience the greatest economic loss from the early first quarter of last year, as some arms of governments more especially the states and local governments fails to provide the proposed aid and relief materials to their people during the pandemic which later exposed by angry youths during the ENDSARS protest in some Southern and Northern states of Nigeria (Ojatorotu, 2021). It is necessary for health professionals, governments and policymakers to recognize the seriousness of the possible socio-economic consequences of COVID-19 on mostly poor individuals.

The World Bank (2000) describes poverty as hunger, lack of shelter, being sick and not being able to see a doctor, not having access to school and not knowing how to read, not having a job, fearing the future, and living one day at a time. All these are nearly to be happen in almost all parts of Bauchi State more especially poor people who are living in typical rural areas.

Statistics show that till date, the majority of poor individuals living mostly in rural areas within Bauchi State fit this description. According to Adam (2020) about 70% or more people living in Bauchi villages are poor individuals who lives daily on less than 1000-naira equivalent to less than \$2.50.

Nigeria at large and Bauchi State in particular also has the repeated factor of poverty that has stayed since the inception of the state, with the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic, this repeated factor would bring in more death and misery to those barely surviving communities.

The effects of colonization, lack of technology, industry, knowledge, ineffective leadership and poor governance, bribery and corruption, lack of vision and foresight have been a major cause of sustained poverty in Nigeria at large and Bauchi State in particular (Yusuf, 2021).

According to Barakatu (2021) the poor population in our state lives in rural areas, who are mainly earning from agriculture, they are living in areas with high agricultural opportunities where they still have many conditions of malnutrition, illiteracy, diseases, dirty surroundings, high infant mortality, and low life expectancy. A disease like COVID-19 would increase such conditions further and further as a result of poor compliance of the prevention measures (Musa, 2021).

Total lock down, closing of shops by food vendors, borders closure by neighboring states, individuals being asked to stay at home leaving public buying and selling and their business activities nearly to be close, gatherings are restricted which leads to un prepared hardships that create a big problem that affect mostly poor individuals who are left in critical condition of poverty (Musa, 2021).

## ZAKAT AS A FINANCING TOOL DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS

Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam which literally means 'that which purifies'. All the Muslims who are eligible to pay must pay minimum 2.5% of their wealth every year to the poor, needy, destitute and others. Zakat is a compulsory charity tool and Islamic finance that can be used for various purposes, mainly for eradicating the poverty from Muslim community. Holy Quran has mentioned at least eight application of Zakat, but there is general consensus that the most important application of Zakat can be for the eradication of poverty by paying it to the needy and poor individuals (Al-Banna, 2019).

Zakat is an important part of Islam as Allah has mentioned more than 30 times in Holy Quran about Zakat. For example, where Allah says:

*"I am with those who prays to Allah, pays Zakat and believe in my messenger. Allah further says in the same Surah that; I will honor and assist them and lend a good loan to Allah and I will erase their sins and take them to the Jannah (paradise) where there are gardens and rivers flowing. If any of you disbelieved, it means he has gone away from the straight path". (Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 12).*



Being brotherhood in Islam as a special care and love to fellow individuals, Muslims are strongly urged to take care of the needy and the poor in the community. It was discovered that through the institution of Zakat poverty was eliminated completely during the reign of 'Umar bin Al-Khattāb and 'Umar bin 'Abdul-Aziz. This means that Islam shows concern into the life of its citizens and extends adequate, possible and practical solutions to their daily problems through Zakat and other Islamic financial institutions to address the individual issues in the society (Adam, 2020).

As mentioned in the Qur'an 9:60, there are eight applications of Zakat mentioned in Holy Quran and five of those applications are related to the poverty alleviation. The basic teachings of Islam is to help the poor people more especially in this difficult time of COVID-19 pandemic which will bring two benefits to the wealthy or rich people as it will purify their wealth and heart from greed as promised by Allah and it will also contribute in the economic growth of the country (Embong, 2013).

Keeping all other objectives of paying Zakat, the most important of them is to help the poor and needy to attain the minimum standard of life (Haider, 2020). Due to the COVID 19 pandemic outbreak in Bauchi communities, the poor individuals and daily wage earners are in urgent need of necessary assistance ranging from food stuffs, water, medical assistance and money, the people who are eligible to pay Zakat and also the Zakat houses and Zakat collection centers can use this money and related relief materials to help the poor and needy during this difficult time of corona virus pandemic (Yusuf, 2021).

Proper collection and distribution of Zakat is a very important agent of eradicating poverty among individuals. The central objective of Islamic finance is to achieve social justice, eradication of poverty among individuals and overall welfare of the society. Islamic finance principles are based on the objective of helping the last man standing in the queue (Haider, 2020).

Zakat and Sadaqah are the Islamic finance tools to help the poor and needy. This can prove to be an effective tool in this critical situation of COVID 19 pandemic. As explained earlier COVID 19 has brought disaster for the poor individuals and Islamic countries and Muslims in the other countries must use Zakat and Sadaqah to help the needy and poor individuals. It is the duty of the leaders in every society to ensure that poor individuals including children and women are empowered (Adam, 2020).

## **DISCUSSIONS**

According to the above investigations and presentations in the study, the discussions revealed that Islamic finance in general and Zakat in particular have the ability to counter the threats and effects arisen in the communities

because of crisis and disaster situations like COVID-19 pandemic in Bauchi State Nigeria. Zakat as the financial tool and concept in Sharia law which can be a valuable solution in this kind of situation of COVID-19 pandemic. Zakat is one of the key pillars of Islamic principles and it is obligatory for every Muslim to pay Zakat when he was due to do so base on Islamic regulations. The well implementation of this particular concept of Islamic finance with current advance technology using artificial intelligence in terms of collecting the names of the proposed beneficiaries and documenting them for future records across the affected communities. Zakat in Bauchi Satae has eradicate poverty to some extent as well as reducing social vices in the area.

At the sametime, it brings the growth and development of their wealth. Zakat also trains the people of Bauchi in acquiring the divine characteristics as well as an expression of gratefulness to the Almighty Allah especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Zakat has improves ties of brotherhood and love among the people of the people and improves the ties of mutual love between the poor and rich of the of Bauchi. Zakat purifies wealth and if you pay zakat on your wealth, you have taken away its evil. Zakat does not purify unlawful wealth (Allah does not erase evil with evil. He rather removes evil with good. Meanwhile, the increase in technology is also utilized in the lives of people in relation to religious activities. Some means of supporting religious activities were created, for example: sign of kosher food, timer for prayer time, qibla compass pointer, Zakah counter application, and so on. Specialized in Zakah, manually and traditionally, people will come to the Zakah counter if they wanted to fulfil its obligations.

## **CONCLUSION**

The provision of social welfare services to vulnerable citizens in the community is the most proven way to protect them from economic hardship in bad times, and the lack of such welfare services for vulnerable people, households and poor individuals during the coronavirus outbreak in Nigeria for example caused sparks of pains and economic hardship to households and poor individuals. The implication of this is that social welfare is not a policy priority by policy makers in Nigeria. As a result of the above observation the researcher recommends that the use of Islamic finance tools more especially Zakat can tremendously contribute in the cutting the menace of COVID-19 pandemic effects on poor individuals in Bauchi communities.

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**Penafian**

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