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## Enhancing the Impact of the BIDARI Program in Kuantan Singingi Through Mentoring and Capital Support

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### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the BIDARI program in strengthening the economic independence of micro, small, and medium enterprises operated by zakat beneficiaries in Riau Province. The program applies an integrated empowerment model combining productive capital assistance, structured mentoring, business legalization support, rebranding, and marketing facilitation. This research employs a community-based approach with descriptive qualitative analysis based on program implementation, mentoring activities, and beneficiary development outcomes. The results indicate that capital assistance becomes more effective when accompanied by continuous supervision and capacity building. Participants show improvements in business management practices, financial organization, product quality, legal compliance, and market access. Support in obtaining business permits and halal certification enhances product credibility, while packaging improvement and digital marketing initiatives increase competitiveness in local markets. Although challenges such as limited digital literacy and uneven business readiness remain, adaptive mentoring strategies help address these constraints. In conclusion, the BIDARI program demonstrates that integrated productive zakat empowerment can promote sustainable business growth and contribute to poverty reduction by transforming beneficiaries into more independent and competitive entrepreneurs.*

**Keywords:** *Productive Zakat, MSME Empowerment, Mentoring, Economic Independence, Poverty Reduction*

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## INTRODUCTION

The socio-economic conditions in Kuantan Singingi Regency reflect a community deeply rooted in cultural heritage and local wisdom, which continue to shape patterns of social interaction and economic behavior. Cultural identity plays an essential role in maintaining social cohesion and guiding community-based economic activities, reinforcing collective values and mutual support systems (Wulandari, 2024). Despite this strong cultural foundation, many zakat beneficiaries (*mustahik*) in the region remain dependent on financial assistance to meet their basic daily needs. This dependency indicates limited economic resilience and a low level of business sustainability among vulnerable groups. Such conditions underline the urgency of implementing comprehensive and structured empowerment programs that move beyond short-term assistance toward long-term capacity building, productive enterprise development, and sustainable economic independence.

Zakat as a social finance instrument has the potential to transform from purely consumptive support into a productive empowerment tool when integrated with mentoring and capital assistance (Sutrisno & Hakimi, 2026). Productive zakat programs aim to develop small and medium enterprises (SMEs), enhance entrepreneurial capabilities, and stimulate local

economic growth by increasing income generation opportunities (Humaidah & Abd Rahim, 2024). Strengthening productive zakat can also influence economic outcomes at the regional level by creating employment opportunities, reducing unemployment, and increasing purchasing power among community members.

Empowerment is a multidimensional concept that includes improvement in economic capacity, social participation, and cultural sustainability (Wulandari, 2024). Effective community empowerment should not only improve income and business skills, but also be sensitive to local cultural values to avoid erosion of community identity. This is consistent with community-based development theories that emphasize the importance of cultural context in achieving sustainable outcomes (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). Without integrating cultural values, economic interventions risk undermining the very social fabrics that support long-term community resilience.

In response to these conditions, the BIDARI Program implemented by Badan Amil Zakat Nasional (BAZNAS) of Riau Province has been designed to increase the welfare of *mustahik* through structured mentoring training and productive capital assistance. The program targets 500 *mustahik* SMEs in Kuantan Singingi, with various activities such as intensive training, mentoring, and business capital support. The continuation of these efforts, including the BIDARI Intensive Training Series II conducted in August 2025, reflects the institution's commitment to fostering economic independence through capacity building. However, the extent to which BIDARI has successfully integrated economic empowerment with cultural preservation and produced measurable socio-economic impacts on *mustahik* in Kuantan Singingi remains unclear.

Thus, it is necessary to systematically evaluate the BIDARI Program to determine whether mentoring training and capital assistance have significant effects on economic empowerment outcomes, such as income improvement, business skills, and entrepreneurial opportunities, while also supporting social participation and cultural values. Identifying both the individual and combined effects of these interventions will provide empirical evidence for improving future community empowerment initiatives.

The rationale for conducting this community service-based research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the BIDARI Program in enhancing the economic empowerment of *mustahik* while simultaneously strengthening social and cultural life in Kuantan Singingi Regency. This evaluation is essential to determine the extent to which mentoring training and capital assistance generate positive impacts, both individually and simultaneously, on income improvement, business skill development, community participation, and the preservation of local cultural values.

More specifically, this study examines the impact of training and mentoring on the capacity of *mustahik* micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), the effectiveness of business capital assistance in fostering economic independence, and aspects of business legality, rebranding, and product marketing as part of strengthening competitiveness. In addition, the research identifies supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the successful implementation of the BIDARI Program in practice. Therefore, the findings are expected to serve as a foundation for developing more effective, adaptive, and sustainable community service programs, while also providing empirical evidence for BAZNAS and relevant stakeholders in designing contextual economic empowerment strategies oriented toward the long-term independence of *mustahik*.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This community service activity adopted a participatory empowerment approach combined with a program evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of the BIDARI Program. The participatory approach emphasizes the active involvement of beneficiaries (mustahik) in identifying needs, engaging in mentoring and training activities, and developing their businesses to promote sustainability and local ownership. This approach is consistent with community-based participatory research and empowerment-oriented evaluation models that position beneficiaries as active agents rather than passive recipients (Mertens & Wilson, 2020).

The subjects of this activity were mustahik micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) beneficiaries of the BIDARI Program in Kuantan Singingi Regency who had received mentoring training and productive business capital assistance from BAZNAS Riau Province. The implementation stages included: (1) a needs assessment to identify business constraints, skill gaps, and market challenges; (2) mentoring and training sessions focusing on entrepreneurial skills, financial management, product development, legality registration, rebranding, and marketing strategies; (3) distribution of productive capital assistance; and (4) monitoring and evaluation of business progress. This structured empowerment cycle aligns with contemporary community development and program evaluation practices that integrate capacity building with measurable socio-economic outcomes (Patton, 2022; Mertens & Wilson, 2020).

Data were collected using mixed methods to capture both measurable economic changes and contextual social dynamics. Structured questionnaires were administered to measure perceived changes in income, business skills, marketing reach, business legality status, and community participation using a Likert-scale instrument. In addition, observations and semi-structured interviews were conducted to identify supporting and inhibiting factors influencing program implementation. The use of multiple data collection techniques allows triangulation and enhances the validity of findings, which is recommended in applied mixed methods research (Flick, 2020; Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2020).

The variables evaluated in this study included: (1) the impact of mentoring and training on MSME capacity, (2) the effectiveness of business capital assistance, (3) improvements in business legality, rebranding, and product marketing, and (4) supporting and inhibiting factors affecting program success. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistical analysis to examine changes in key economic indicators and qualitative descriptive analysis to interpret social and cultural impacts. This combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis follows contemporary mixed methods evaluation designs that seek to integrate outcome measurement with contextual interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Through this methodological framework, the community service activity provides an evidence-based evaluation of the BIDARI Program while generating practical recommendations for strengthening sustainable and context-sensitive economic empowerment initiatives for mustahik beneficiaries.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Impact of Training and Mentoring on MSME Capacity**

Intensive training and continuous mentoring have demonstrated a significant impact on strengthening the capacity of MSME actors participating in the BIDARI Program. Participants

showed improvements in business management practices, product quality enhancement, and the implementation of more effective marketing strategies. Regular weekly coaching conducted by local facilitators and the BAZNAS team enabled participants to identify operational challenges and respond to business problems more quickly and strategically. Continuous mentoring has been widely recognized as a key factor in improving entrepreneurial competence, decision-making confidence, and business sustainability (Tambunan, 2022; Patton, 2022). As a result, participants developed greater self-confidence in making business decisions and managing risks.

The long-term mentoring model implemented over a three-year period provides MSMEs with structured and consistent guidance, allowing gradual but sustainable business growth. Sustainable mentoring approaches are considered more effective than short-term interventions because they promote behavioral change, adaptive learning, and progressive capacity building (Mertens & Wilson, 2020). Through continuous engagement, beneficiaries are encouraged to transition from dependency-based assistance toward independent business management.

The BIDARI Program was specifically designed to provide comprehensive assistance to MSME actors, particularly in bookkeeping, marketing, and business digitalization. Participants are gathered periodically at least once a month to attend structured coaching sessions aimed at strengthening their business capacity. These sessions provide not only technical knowledge but also strategic direction to help entrepreneurs manage their enterprises more professionally and competitively. The integration of financial literacy, marketing capability, and digital adaptation aligns with contemporary MSME development frameworks that emphasize innovation and market responsiveness as drivers of business resilience (Kotler & Keller, 2022; Rundh, 2020).



Picture 1: The image illustrates a direct mentoring session between a program facilitator and a micro-entrepreneur beneficiary. The facilitator is seen handing over business support funds as part of a structured empowerment program, symbolizing the integration of financial assistance and mentoring support.

After fulfilling business legality requirements, participants were reconvened to attend packaging training. The packaging model and quality were adjusted to meet market standards to enhance product attractiveness and competitiveness. Proper packaging has been widely recognized as a critical factor influencing consumer perception, product differentiation, and purchasing decisions, particularly for micro and small enterprises (Rundh, 2020; Silayoi &

Speece, 2021). Once the packaging design was finalized and approved, the printing process was conducted in collaboration with the central BAZNAS office to ensure standardized branding and quality consistency. In addition to packaging improvement, participants received marketing support through continuous business monitoring, facilitation to access broader MSME networks and regional markets, and promotion at relevant business and community events. Marketing assistance and network expansion are essential components of MSME strengthening, as they contribute significantly to business sustainability and market penetration (Kotler & Keller, 2022; Tambunan, 2022).

### **Effectiveness of Business Capital Assistance**

Business capital assistance constitutes a critical component in accelerating the growth of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Within the BIDARI program, priority participants receive larger amounts of capital to enhance production capacity, upgrade equipment, or expand market reach, while other participants obtain financial support tailored to their basic business development needs. This productive capital encourages mustahik to diversify products and improve service quality. Evaluation findings indicate that capital assistance accompanied by structured and intensive mentoring is significantly more effective than unconditional financial aid, as beneficiaries are guided to allocate funds appropriately and strategically. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing that productive zakat distribution combined with supervision and mentoring produces stronger impacts on microenterprise performance and mustahik welfare (Beik & Arsyianti, 2023; Rahman & Wahyuni, 2024).

The BIDARI program is designed as a comprehensive empowerment model focusing on bookkeeping, marketing, and digitalization. Participants attend regular coaching sessions at least once a month to strengthen their business capacity. These sessions provide not only technical knowledge but also strategic direction to ensure professional and sustainable business management. Such an integrated empowerment approach reflects contemporary productive zakat models in Indonesia, which emphasize long-term capacity building rather than short-term charity distribution (Huda et al., 2023; Sari & Firmansyah, 2025).

The assessment process is conducted one day prior to the official announcement of beneficiaries. After the announcement, 20 selected MSMEs receive capital disbursement directly through their respective bank accounts. The funds must be allocated exclusively for business purposes rather than personal consumption. Participants are provided with guidance regarding appropriate equipment purchases according to their business sector. For example, snack producers are encouraged to purchase production tools such as large cooking pots, steamers, or other relevant equipment. Additionally, participants receive assistance in obtaining legal permits, including the Home Industry Food Production Certificate (PIRT) and halal certification facilitated through authorized institutions.



Picture 2: The image depicts the direct distribution of business capital assistance to small entrepreneurs as part of an effort to enhance the effectiveness of economic empowerment initiatives.

Upon fulfilling legal requirements, participants attend packaging training sessions. Packaging models and quality are adjusted to market standards to enhance product competitiveness. Once the packaging design is approved, printing is conducted in collaboration with BAZNAS headquarters. Participants also receive marketing support through business monitoring, assistance in accessing broader MSME networks, and promotional opportunities at relevant MSME events. Strengthening market access and branding is widely recognized as a crucial factor in improving MSME competitiveness and sustainability (Kementerian Koperasi dan UKM, 2024).

The mentoring process within the BIDARI program spans three years, beginning with an initial assessment phase in December of the current year. The first year focuses on participant selection and foundational strengthening, the second year emphasizes intensive mentoring, and the third year concentrates on impact evaluation. Capital disbursement is conducted once, specifically for mustahik engaged in productive sectors such as food, beverages, traditional herbal products, or local handicrafts, excluding reseller-based businesses. Participant qualifications are determined at the provincial level, requiring that businesses have operated for at least one year, beneficiaries are within productive age (not above 50 years old), classified as economically disadvantaged based on official documentation, and commit to displaying the BIDARI logo on their products.

The effectiveness of the program becomes increasingly evident through its structured three-year mentoring system, including monthly coaching on bookkeeping, marketing strategies, digital transformation, and business legality. This long-term assistance strengthens participants' technical understanding and broadens their awareness of industry standards. According to the National Zakat Outlook and Mustahik Welfare Index reports, productive zakat programs that incorporate systematic mentoring demonstrate measurable improvements in income stability and business sustainability (BAZNAS RI, 2023; Puskas BAZNAS, 2023).

From a marketing perspective, BIDARI enhances competitiveness through packaging training, rebranding assistance, and participation in MSME exhibitions and events. These interventions improve product professionalism, quality standards, and access to broader

markets. Empirical evidence suggests that structured productive zakat programs significantly contribute to MSME growth and poverty alleviation when integrated with mentoring and monitoring mechanisms (Beik & Arsyanti, 2023; Rahman & Wahyuni, 2024).

Overall, BIDARI does not merely provide financial assistance but establishes a sustainable empowerment ecosystem integrating capital support, competency development, legal facilitation, and market access. This synergy results in increased economic independence among mustahik, strengthened entrepreneurial capacity, and a shift in mindset from subsistence-based micro-entrepreneurs to competitive and growth-oriented business actors. In the long term, the program contributes to local economic development and supports poverty alleviation through a productive and sustainable approach, consistent with national strategies for MSME transformation and productive zakat optimization in Indonesia (BAZNAS RI, 2024; Sari & Firmansyah, 2025).

### **Legalization, Rebranding, and Product Marketing**

Business legalization, certification, and rebranding play a pivotal role in ensuring the sustainability and competitiveness of MSMEs. Within the BIDARI program, participants are assisted in obtaining formal business permits, halal certification, and improving packaging quality and brand identity. Legal compliance enhances market legitimacy and enables MSMEs to access broader distribution channels, including digital marketplaces, retail stores, and regional trade exhibitions. Recent studies indicate that formalization significantly increases MSME credibility, financial inclusion opportunities, and long-term growth prospects (Yoshino & Taghizadeh-Hesary, 2023).

*Halal* certification and food safety permits, such as home-industry food licenses, further strengthen consumer trust and expand access to Muslim-majority markets. Research highlights that halal assurance not only fulfills regulatory requirements but also functions as a strategic branding instrument that increases perceived product quality and market acceptance (Ismail & Shafiai, 2024; Hassan, Azmi, & Rahman, 2023). For micro-scale food producers, certification contributes directly to improved brand reputation and competitive positioning.

Rebranding initiatives under the BIDARI program include packaging redesign, logo development, and visual identity enhancement. Modern packaging aligned with market standards improves product attractiveness and perceived value. Empirical findings show that packaging innovation significantly influences purchase intention and brand recall, particularly in competitive MSME sectors (Nuryakin & Maryati, 2024; Silva, Duarte, & Ferreira, 2023). Through structured branding support, MSMEs are better positioned to differentiate their products in saturated local markets.



**Picture 3** shows a variety of products produced by small entrepreneurs after receiving business capital assistance, including packaged snacks, bottled cooking oil, and small business equipment.

Marketing reinforcement is also conducted through social media optimization, marketplace onboarding, and integration into BAZNAS partner networks. Digital transformation has become a key determinant of MSME resilience, particularly in emerging economies. Studies demonstrate that MSMEs adopting digital marketing tools experience increased sales performance, wider customer reach, and stronger customer engagement (Kraus et al., 2023; Tambunan & Handayani, 2024). By combining digital promotion strategies with participation in MSME exhibitions and regional events, BIDARI strengthens both online and offline market penetration.

The integration of legalization, certification, rebranding, and digital marketing within the BIDARI framework enhances consumer trust, expands market access, and strengthens MSME competitiveness. This multidimensional intervention not only improves short-term sales performance but also establishes a sustainable foundation for long-term business growth and economic empowerment.

### **Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of the Program**

The implementation of the BIDARI program is influenced by both enabling and constraining factors that shape its overall effectiveness. Institutional commitment, participant motivation, and collaboration with local stakeholders play a central role in strengthening program outcomes. At the same time, structural challenges such as limited digital literacy, unequal market access, and varying levels of business readiness require adaptive and context-sensitive interventions.

#### **a. Supporting Factors**

The BIDARI program, initiated by BAZNAS of Riau Province in 2024 in Pekanbaru and subsequently expanded to several districts, represents a strategic effort to strengthen the local economy through mustahik-based MSME empowerment. Targeting 500 MSME actors, the program integrates training, mentoring, and business support within a structured and sustainable framework. Such an integrated empowerment model aligns with contemporary community development approaches that emphasize systemic intervention rather than fragmented assistance (UNDP, 2024; World Bank, 2023).

One of the primary strengths of the program lies in its intensive training and mentoring components. Capacity-building activities focus on managerial skills, production techniques,

bookkeeping, and marketing strategies. Regular mentoring, including weekly coaching sessions, allows participants to directly address operational challenges in real time. Research indicates that consistent mentoring significantly improves MSME resilience, managerial competence, and business survival rates (OECD, 2023; Kraus et al., 2023). By combining theory with practice-based guidance, BIDARI ensures that knowledge acquisition translates into practical business improvements.

Business capital assistance further reinforces the program's impact. Financial support is utilized for raw materials, equipment procurement, business expansion, and product quality enhancement. In addition, attention to business legalization and rebranding such as licensing facilitation, packaging improvement, and brand identity strengthening enhances product competitiveness and consumer trust. Studies highlight that integrated financial and non-financial support mechanisms substantially improve MSME productivity and market positioning (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2024; Tambunan & Handayani, 2024).

In terms of marketing, BIDARI provides facilitation strategies that expand participants' market reach. Support includes digital platform utilization, participation in exhibitions, and access to BAZNAS partner networks. Digital adoption and network-based marketing have been identified as key determinants of MSME competitiveness in emerging economies (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2023; OECD, 2023). Through these multidimensional interventions, BIDARI contributes not only to business performance improvement but also to the broader objective of economic independence and poverty alleviation.

#### **b. Inhibiting Factors**

Despite its strengths, the BIDARI program faces several implementation challenges. One major constraint is limited digital literacy among some participants. Many MSME actors lack the skills necessary for digital bookkeeping, online marketing, and social media promotion. Consequently, digital coaching sessions must be conducted more intensively and repetitively to ensure comprehension and practical application. Digital capability gaps remain a common barrier to MSME transformation in developing regions (World Bank, 2023; ILO, 2023).

Limited market access also presents a significant challenge, particularly for participants located in areas with small local markets and minimal promotional events. Restricted distribution networks and low exposure reduce product visibility and sales potential. Addressing this issue requires expanded exhibition facilitation and stronger marketing partnerships to bridge local MSMEs with broader supply chains (ADB, 2024).

Another inhibiting factor is the variation in business readiness among participants. While some MSMEs are relatively established, others operate at a very basic level in terms of management systems and production equipment. This disparity necessitates differentiated mentoring approaches tailored to each participant's capacity level to maintain program inclusivity and effectiveness. Adaptive and needs-based assistance models are widely recommended to ensure sustainable MSME development outcomes (UNDP, 2024).

Overcoming these constraints requires an adaptive mentoring strategy, including additional digital literacy training, strengthened technology-based marketing capabilities, and expanded marketing networks. With responsive adjustments, potential barriers can be minimized, thereby maintaining program sustainability and maximizing its long-term empowerment impact.

## CONCLUSION

This study answers the research question by demonstrating that the BIDARI program effectively strengthens the economic independence and business sustainability of mustahik-based MSMEs through an integrated empowerment approach rather than through capital assistance alone. The findings show that productive capital becomes significantly more impactful when combined with structured mentoring, legalization facilitation, rebranding support, and market access expansion. Sustained guidance and continuous supervision foster progressive improvement in business management practices, encourage more responsible financial behavior, and stimulate product innovation aligned with market demands. At the same time, formal business licensing and stronger brand identity increase market legitimacy, broaden distribution opportunities, and reinforce consumer confidence. Although challenges such as limited digital literacy, unequal market access, and varying levels of business readiness remain, adaptive mentoring and continuous capacity building help mitigate these constraints. Overall, the BIDARI program illustrates that zakat-based economic empowerment can function as a sustainable poverty alleviation strategy when implemented through a systematic, monitored, and long-term development framework that transforms beneficiaries from aid recipients into independent and growth-oriented entrepreneurs.

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