ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the economic empowerment experiences of mustahik through the productive zakat program at LAZISMU Semarang City, focusing on changes in economic conditions, the meaning of assistance, and experiences of interaction and mentoring. This study employed a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach involving five mustahik as primary informants and three LAZISMU representatives as supporting informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and documentation and analyzed through meaning-unit identification, coding, theme development, the hermeneutic cycle, interpretation, and synthesis of the essence of experience. Data credibility was strengthened through triangulation and member checking.

The findings show that economic empowerment occurs gradually and varies among mustahik. Empowerment is reflected in the ability to sustain businesses, meet family needs, manage resources, reduce dependency, and make economic decisions more independently. Productive zakat is understood as a resource that supports mustahik in sustaining their economic lives. For mustahik, interaction and mentoring provide knowledge, motivation, promotion, networks, and business support, while for program managers, they serve as part of monitoring, guidance, and support adjustment. The essence of empowerment lies in the increasing ability of mustahik to sustain, manage, and determine the direction of their economic lives despite existing limitations.

Keywords: *productive zakat, economic empowerment, mustahik, hermeneutic phenomenology, LAZISMU.*