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## ISLAMIC PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL EDUCATION AS A HOLISTIC SOLUTION TO ALLEVIATING EXTREME POVERTY IN INDONESIA

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### Abstract

This study explores the role of Islamic education through a psycho-spiritual approach in alleviating extreme poverty in Indonesia. Extreme poverty, which encompasses economic, social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions, requires a holistic approach to empowerment. Islamic education is more than just a transfer of knowledge; it shapes character and positive mentality through values such as patience, sincerity, and social care. This study employs a literature review method with a qualitative approach to analyze how psycho-spiritual education can be part of a sustainable solution. The findings indicate that integrating psycho-spiritual education into poverty alleviation programs can help build individuals' mental and spiritual resilience. With collaboration between the government, Islamic educational institutions, and community organizations, this approach has the potential to be an effective strategy for addressing the challenges of extreme poverty. This research offers a new perspective on empowering communities through holistic education.

**Keywords:** Islamic education; extreme poverty; psycho-spiritual approach; community empowerment

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran pendidikan Islam melalui pendekatan psikologis spiritual dalam mengentaskan kemiskinan ekstrim di Indonesia. Kemiskinan ekstrim, yang tidak hanya terbatas pada aspek ekonomi tetapi juga mencakup dimensi sosial, psikologis, dan spiritual, memerlukan pendekatan holistik untuk pemberdayaannya. Pendidikan Islam berfungsi lebih dari sekadar transfer pengetahuan, melainkan membentuk karakter dan mentalitas positif melalui nilai-nilai seperti kesabaran, keikhlasan, dan kepedulian sosial. Studi ini menggunakan metode studi pustaka dengan pendekatan kualitatif untuk menganalisis bagaimana pendidikan psikologis spiritual dapat menjadi bagian dari solusi berkelanjutan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi pendidikan psikologis spiritual dalam program pengentasan kemiskinan dapat membantu membangun ketahanan mental dan spiritual individu. Dengan kolaborasi antara pemerintah, lembaga pendidikan Islam, dan organisasi masyarakat, pendekatan ini berpotensi menjadi strategi yang efektif dalam menghadapi tantangan kemiskinan ekstrim. Penelitian ini menawarkan perspektif baru dalam pemberdayaan masyarakat melalui pendidikan yang holistik.

**Kata kunci:** pendidikan Islam; kemiskinan ekstrim; pendekatan psikologis spiritual; pemberdayaan masyarakat

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## Introduction

Indonesia has attained the status of an upper-middle-income country, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of US\$ 4,783 in 2021 (Sofian et al., 2021). This achievement signifies substantial economic progress; however, behind these numbers lies the reality that poverty, particularly extreme poverty, remains a critical issue. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (2023) indicates that approximately 4% of the total population, or around 10.86 million people, still live in extreme poverty. This situation presents a significant challenge for Indonesia, as a developing nation aspiring to achieve the status of a developed country.

Extreme poverty reflects limited access to basic needs such as food, housing, and healthcare and highlights deeper social, psychological, and spiritual issues (World Bank, 2022). Individuals living in extreme poverty often face social stigma, a loss of self-confidence, and disconnection from social support networks that could help them escape their circumstances (Alkire et al., 2021). Therefore, poverty alleviation efforts must involve a holistic and comprehensive approach, focusing on economic improvement and empowering individuals mentally and spiritually (Suyanto, 2021).

Education, particularly Islamic education, plays a crucial role in this context (Latief, 2020). Islamic education serves as a means of knowledge transfer and shaping individual character and morality (Hasan, 2019). Through the values it teaches, such as patience, sincerity, hard work, and social compassion, Islamic education can help build awareness and foster a positive mentality among impoverished communities. Non-formal and informal Islamic education, which has become an integral part of Indonesian society, holds great potential in the efforts to alleviate extreme poverty (Raihani, 2021).

The psycho-spiritual approach in Islamic education emphasizes the importance of self-awareness, mental resilience, and a deeper connection with God. This approach can provide individuals with internal strength to face life's challenges, motivating them to work hard and actively overcome poverty. Moreover, Islamic education can foster social solidarity and a sense of collective responsibility within society, enhancing collective efforts to address extreme poverty (Latief, 2020).

Numerous studies have examined the role of Islamic educational institutions in promoting entrepreneurship and self-reliance in Indonesia. Several pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) have developed programs to economically empower their students, as highlighted by Muhammad Murtadlo and his colleagues in "*Top 10 Ekosantri: Pionir Kemandirian Pesantren*" (Murtadlo, 2017). Research conducted by Muhammad Rozikan (Rozikan, 2017) also indicates that entrepreneurial mindsets can be nurtured from an early age, particularly in early childhood education, by incorporating the values of spiritual entrepreneurship into the learning process. An article by Jozef Raco and colleagues noted that spirituality can motivate individuals to seek meaning in life, serving as a powerful force for raising awareness in entrepreneurship (Raco et al., 2019).

Therefore, it is crucial to explore how Islamic education, through a psycho-spiritual approach, can be part of an effective and sustainable solution to alleviating extreme poverty in Indonesia. The novelty of this research lies in its holistic approach, combining Islamic education and psychological spirituality as an empowerment strategy for poverty alleviation. Unlike conventional approaches that primarily focus on economic aspects, this study emphasizes the importance of building mental and spiritual strength as a foundation for sustainable change. Islamic education is a means of knowledge transfer and a platform for shaping positive character and mentality. By emphasizing values such as patience, sincerity, and social

solidarity, this approach aims to equip individuals with the mental resilience necessary to confront the challenges of poverty.

This study also proposes integrating psycho-spiritual education into poverty alleviation programs, involving collaboration between the government, Islamic educational institutions, and community organizations. Thus, this research offers a new perspective on understanding and addressing extreme poverty through spiritual and mental empowerment.

## Method

This study employed a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of extreme poverty and the role of Islamic education, particularly psycho-spiritual education, in alleviation. The data was presented descriptively, using words or sentences to describe the phenomenon under investigation (Polkinghorne, 1989).

A literature review method was chosen as it allowed the researcher to explore and analyze various relevant sources, including books, journals, articles, and magazines related to Islamic education and spiritual psychology. This study utilized secondary data, which provided a strong theoretical foundation and supported reflective interpretation (Creswell, 1998). In this study, secondary data collection was the primary data-gathering approach, focusing on documented literature sources. Data were sourced from a range of books, academic journals, scholarly articles, research reports, and official government documents accessible through online databases like JSTOR, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and institutional repositories. Offline sources, including printed books and research reports, were also incorporated. The literature selected was rigorously evaluated for credibility, validity, and relevance, with particular attention to topics on extreme poverty, Islamic education, and psycho-spiritual approaches.

Once the literature was selected, the data gathering phase involved extracting key information from each source. The gathered data encompassed definitions, concepts, theories, empirical findings, and expert perspectives on themes of extreme poverty, Islamic education, and psycho-spiritual education. Furthermore, details on government policies and Islamic education practices across different countries were collected to understand both global and local contexts and identify strategies that could be effective in these settings.

The collected data were then subjected to data classification to streamline the analysis process. The information was grouped according to relevant themes, concepts, and variables, allowing for an organized approach to analyzing each critical aspect. Subtopics included indicators of extreme poverty, the role of Islamic education, psycho-spiritual approaches, and related case studies.

Following classification, the data were systematized into structured formats such as tables, diagrams, and concept maps. This step helped the researcher identify correlations and relationships between variables and pinpoint areas needing further investigation. Organized mapping of Islamic educational methods and poverty alleviation strategies facilitated a comprehensive approach to the data analysis phase.

Finally, data analysis was conducted using content and reflective analysis methods. Content analysis allowed for the systematic examination of source material, drawing out key themes and patterns related to extreme poverty and Islamic education. Reflective analysis complemented this by integrating various

perspectives to deepen the understanding of the research topic, particularly in exploring how psycho-spiritual education could play a role in alleviating extreme poverty

This research also considered ethical considerations, including respect for copyright and intellectual property rights. Applicable academic standards cited all sources. Through a comprehensive literature review and in-depth analysis, this research aims to significantly contribute to understanding the role of Islamic education and psycho-spiritual approaches as potential solutions for alleviating extreme poverty.

## Results and Discussion

### Criteria and Indicators of Extreme Poverty

Extreme poverty describes a situation where individuals or households live below the international minimum living standards. According to the World Bank, the extreme poverty threshold is defined as earning less than USD 1.90 per day (World Bank, 2023). However, poverty is not solely related to income; it also encompasses access to basic needs and overall quality of life. In Indonesia, poverty measurement is conducted through a comprehensive approach by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), which considers various aspects of life.

#### Poverty Criteria According to the Ministry of Social Affairs

The Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs employs a multidimensional approach to identify poverty. Through the Ministerial Decision Number 262 of 2022, nine criteria have been identified as key indicators of poverty, known as the “9 chains of poverty” (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2023a). These criteria include:

- a. **Housing Ownership:** Individuals who lack permanent housing or have housing in very poor condition, such as earthen floors, walls made of non-permanent materials, and inadequate sanitation facilities.
- b. **Head of Household Employment:** Families where the head of the household is unemployed or engaged in work that does not provide sufficient income.
- c. **Food Consumption:** Households whose expenditures on food exceed half of their total expenditures, indicating an inability to meet other basic needs.
- d. **Clothing Expenditure:** Families that have not spent money on clothing in the past year demonstrate an inability to meet clothing needs.
- e. **Access to Clean Water and Sanitation:** The absence of sanitation facilities and access to safe drinking water directly impacts health and quality of life.
- f. **Source of Lighting:** Households that use non-electric lighting sources or electricity with very low capacity, indicating limited access to basic infrastructure.
- g. **Ownership of Latrines:** The absence of personal latrines or reliance on community latrines reflects low sanitation standards.
- h. **Dependence on Social Assistance:** Reliance on social assistance as the primary source of livelihood, indicating an inability to achieve economic independence.

- i. **Social Interaction:** Individuals or families in poverty often tend to socialize and interact with their peers, which can limit access to information and opportunities.

This approach by the Ministry of Social Affairs highlights the complexity of poverty, which cannot be viewed solely from an economic perspective. For example, an individual with income lacking access to clean water or adequate sanitation is still classified as poor. This demonstrates that poverty is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing various aspects of daily life.

### **Basic Needs Fulfillment Approach by the Central Statistics Agency**

The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) employs a basic needs fulfillment approach to measure poverty. This approach assesses the economic capability of individuals or households to meet basic food and non-food needs. The poverty line is established based on per capita monthly expenditures required to satisfy these basic needs. As of March 2023, the poverty line in Indonesia was set at IDR 550,458 per capita per month (BPS, 2023).

This BPS approach focuses on consumption as the primary indicator of poverty. Residents are considered poor if their average per capita monthly expenditure falls below the poverty line. These expenditures include essential needs such as food, clothing, housing, education, and healthcare. Thus, this approach emphasizes the economic aspect as the main determinant of poverty status. However, this approach also considers income distribution and necessities' prices. For instance, increasing food prices can push more people into poverty, even if their income remains unchanged. Therefore, this approach is dynamic and can reflect changes in economic conditions in real time.

### **Extreme Poverty in the International Context**

Extreme poverty is a global issue that is a primary focus of the international development agenda. The United Nations (UN) has set a goal to end extreme poverty by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Rassanjani, 2018). The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on an income below USD 1.90 per day.

As one of the countries committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Indonesia has set an ambitious target to eradicate extreme poverty by 2024, six years ahead of the global target (Waluyo, 2023). Achieving this target requires a comprehensive and multisectoral approach. Economic interventions alone are insufficient; social, educational, health, and community empowerment interventions are also necessary.

The international approach to extreme poverty also involves non-economic dimensions, such as human rights, gender equality, and access to basic services. For example, access to quality education and healthcare is a fundamental right that must be fulfilled to eradicate poverty. Additionally, empowering women and other vulnerable groups is a key focus in alleviating extreme poverty.

### **Poverty Indicators**

Poverty indicators used to measure and understand the level of poverty within a community often focus on economic aspects, such as income and household expenditures. However, this approach has limitations in capturing other dimensions of poverty, such as access to education, healthcare, adequate housing, and social security (Aprianto, 2018).

- a. **Income and Expenditure:** These are the most commonly used economic indicators. The total household income is compared to the poverty line to determine whether they fall below or above the poverty threshold. Expenditures are also used to assess access to basic needs, such as food, housing, and healthcare services.
- b. **Access to Education:** Education is a key factor in poverty alleviation. This indicator encompasses school participation, literacy, and access to quality education. A lack of access to education hinders individuals' opportunities to secure decent employment and improve their well-being.
- c. **Access to Healthcare:** Access to adequate healthcare services is another important indicator. Poverty is often linked to poor health due to limited access to medical care, inadequate nutrition, and unhealthy living environments.
- d. **Housing Quality:** This indicator encompasses access to clean water, sanitation, and the overall condition of living spaces. Poor housing quality can negatively impact individuals' health and well-being.
- e. **Social Security:** The availability of social safety nets, such as social assistance programs, health insurance, and unemployment benefits, is also a crucial indicator. Social security protects individuals and households against risks that could push them into poverty.

Poverty also has psychological, spiritual, and social dimensions that are often overlooked in conventional measurements. Individuals living in poverty may experience mental strain, stress, and feelings of hopelessness, which can exacerbate their situation. Additionally, poverty can lead to social exclusion, where certain individuals or groups lack equal access to opportunities and resources.

Therefore, poverty alleviation requires a holistic approach that addresses various dimensions of life. Interventions must include improving access to education, healthcare, housing, and social services and empowering individuals and communities to tackle the psycho-spiritual aspects of poverty. This comprehensive approach can make efforts to alleviate extreme poverty more effective and sustainable.

### **Alleviating Extreme Poverty Begins with Psycho-spiritual Education**

Extreme poverty is not merely an economic issue; it is also closely tied to individuals' psycho-spiritual aspects. Psycho-spiritual education offers a comprehensive approach to addressing this issue, focusing on mental and spiritual empowerment rather than just fulfilling material needs. This form of education aims to build mental resilience, self-confidence, and motivation for sustainable change.

#### **The Importance of a Psycho-spiritual Approach**

Individuals living in extreme poverty often experience severe mental strain, including stress, depression, and feelings of hopelessness. Poverty can lead to a loss of self-esteem and confidence in one's ability to escape their circumstances. These individuals frequently feel isolated and lack adequate access to supportive social networks. This situation creates a negative cycle that makes it difficult for them to perceive opportunities or hope for a better future (Larlee, 2023).

Psycho-spiritual education can serve as an effective intervention to break this cycle. Education becomes profoundly meaningful and crucial for human survival when its transformation and internalization processes involve spiritual aspects, including meaning, values, transcendence, and the

interconnectedness of learners. This approach helps individuals become happy in biological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions (Mujib, 2015). Providing emotional and spiritual support, this education aids individuals in understanding and managing their feelings while building a more positive outlook on life. For instance, through a psycho-spiritual approach, individuals can learn to view poverty not as an unchangeable curse but as a challenge to be overcome. They are taught to find meaning and purpose in life, providing them the internal strength to rise and strive to change their destinies.

The psycho-spiritual approach also emphasizes developing an optimistic and proactive attitude. Individuals who believe they have control over their lives and can effect change are more likely to strive for and achieve their goals. This optimistic mindset is crucial when facing the challenges and obstacles that may arise while escaping poverty (Putri & Muhajarah, 2024).

Moreover, psycho-spiritual education can instill positive values such as patience, perseverance, and gratitude. These values can help individuals face difficulties more calmly and prevent them from giving up easily (Khaki, 2020). For example, gratitude can help individuals remain focused on the positive aspects of their lives, even when they encounter numerous challenges. This focus can empower them to continue striving and prevent them from becoming trapped in despair.

### **The Role of Islamic Education in Alleviating Extreme Poverty**

Islamic education plays a unique and vital role in alleviating extreme poverty, mainly through the lens of psycho-spiritual approaches (Latief & Nashir, 2020). Islamic educational institutions, both formal and informal, possess extensive networks that are closely connected to communities, including the most vulnerable groups facing poverty. They have long served as moral and spiritual development centers, offering guidance encompassing various life aspects (Raihani, 2017).

Islamic education emphasizes the importance of knowledge and learning as keys to improving the quality of life (Hasan, 2019). In this context, Islamic education focuses on developing life skills and a profound understanding of how to lead a good and meaningful life (Saharuddin et al., 2021). Through the education and training programs offered by Islamic educational institutions, individuals can acquire the skills necessary for earning a livelihood and enhancing their living standards. For instance, many pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) provide training programs in agriculture, handicrafts, and other technical abilities. These skills can help individuals achieve greater economic independence.

Moreover, Islamic education instills spiritual values such as patience, gratitude, sincerity, and social concern. These values can assist individuals in cultivating a positive attitude when facing life's challenges. For example, patience and sincerity can help someone accept their situation calmly and without despair while working diligently for change. Social concern taught in Islam as a form of worship can encourage individuals to support and assist one another within their communities, thereby creating a robust social support network.

Islamic educational institutions also possess the capacity to provide profound spiritual support. They can assist individuals in strengthening their relationship with God, which can be a source of strength and comfort in facing life's challenges (Jos & Pandey, 2022). In many cases, faith and trust in God can instill hope and courage in individuals, enabling them to confront and overcome difficulties.

## Non-Formal and Informal Education as Solutions

Non-formal and informal education offers high flexibility and accessibility for communities that may not have access to formal educational systems (Azra, 2015). Non-formal and informal Islamic educational institutions, such as *pesantren*, *madrasah diniyah*, and *majelis taklim*, serve as centers for learning and empowerment for those in extreme poverty. They provide religious education and various social and psychological support (Lukens-Bull, 2010).

Pesantren, for instance, have long been centers of education encompassing a wide array of life aspects (Sirry, 2010). In addition to religious education, pesantren offers skills training and practical knowledge to help students achieve greater economic independence. Pesantren often serve as safe havens for children from impoverished families, providing them with education, guidance, and opportunities for a better future (Raihani, 2012).

Majelis Taklim and other study groups also play an essential role in delivering psycho-spiritual education to communities. Through these activities, individuals can learn about religious values and how to apply them daily. They can also build strong social support networks, which can help them feel more connected and supported as they navigate life's challenges (Zuhdi, 2018).

Non-formal and informal education also offer advantages in terms of a more personal and contextual approach. These educational formats can tailor teaching methods and materials to meet individuals' needs and circumstances (Suryadi & Budimansyah, 2016). For example, in formal education, the curriculum may be general and less relevant to the lived experiences of those in extreme poverty. In contrast, non-formal and informal education can adapt learning materials to provide practical skills that are immediately useful, along with psycho-spiritual guidance relevant to their daily lives.

With a holistic approach centered on individual needs, non-formal and informal education can help develop the full potential of individuals (Mohtar et al., 2019). They equip individuals with skills and knowledge and foster the mental and spiritual strength necessary to face and overcome extreme poverty. Thus, psycho-spiritual education through non-formal and informal Islamic educational institutions holds significant potential to become part of a sustainable and effective solution for alleviating extreme poverty.

## Implementation of Psychological Spiritual Education in Poverty Alleviation Programs

Collaboration between the government, Islamic educational institutions, and community organizations is essential to integrate psycho-spiritual education effectively into poverty alleviation programs. This approach can be implemented through a series of strategic steps. First, Capacity Building for Islamic Educational Institutions is crucial, where the government can provide training and financial assistance to non-formal and informal Islamic educational institutions. This training should cover methods of effective psycho-spiritual education and techniques for identifying and supporting individuals who experience mental distress due to poverty.

Second, Development of a Curriculum Based on Psychological Spirituality can enhance the program's impact. Islamic educational institutions can design a curriculum that integrates psycho-spiritual education with life skills, equipping individuals with practical knowledge while also strengthening their spiritual and mental resilience.



Third, providing Mentoring and Counseling Services is essential, as Islamic educational institutions can offer support to individuals dealing with poverty-related psycho-spiritual challenges. This support might include individual or group counseling sessions and continuous spiritual guidance to foster mental well-being.

Lastly, combining psycho-spiritual education with Economically Empowering Programs Based on Spirituality can provide sustainable benefits. These programs might offer skills training and access to business capital, allowing individuals to build ventures aligned with spiritual values such as honesty, hard work, and social responsibility. Through these steps, Islamic educational institutions can play a pivotal role in alleviating poverty by addressing both the economic and spiritual dimensions of individual empowerment.

By implementing these steps, psycho-spiritual education can become integral to alleviating extreme poverty. This approach focuses on providing short-term aid and empowering individuals to transform their lives and build a better future.

## Conclusion

This research asserts that extreme poverty is not merely an economic issue but is also associated with the psycho-spiritual aspects of individuals. Through a psycho-spiritual approach, Islamic education is crucial in empowering individuals and communities to overcome poverty. The values imparted, such as patience, sincerity, and social concern, contribute to the development of resilience and a positive mindset in facing the challenges of extreme poverty.

Non-formal and informal education provided by Islamic boarding schools, study circles, and other Islamic educational institutions offers a more accessible and flexible approach. This enables the psycho-spiritual support critically needed by the most vulnerable communities. This form of education transfers knowledge and builds mental and spiritual resilience, motivating individuals to combat poverty.

Therefore, integrating a psycho-spiritual approach in poverty alleviation programs, involving collaboration between the government, Islamic educational institutions, and community organizations, is vital to creating sustainable solutions. Through a comprehensive approach focused on mental, spiritual, and economic empowerment, extreme poverty alleviation programs are expected to impact Indonesia significantly.

This study also implies that poverty alleviation efforts must adopt a holistic approach that considers psycho-spiritual aspects rather than focusing solely on economic factors. Thus, strong collaboration between the government and Islamic educational institutions is recommended to develop a curriculum that emphasizes mental and spiritual resilience and provides regulatory support and resources to ensure the sustainability of these poverty alleviation solutions.

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