

NAQUIB AL-ATTAS'S PHILOSOPHY IN PESANTREN LEARNING: IMPLICATIONS FOR GEN X MOTIVATION TO PROVIDE HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THEIR CHILDREN

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Abstract: *This study aims to reconstruct the concept of Islamic educational philosophy from the perspective of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and to analyze its implications for the motivation of Generation X parents to continue their children's education through higher education. This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, utilizing in-depth interviews and participatory observation within a Muslim community rooted in the pesantren tradition in the mountainous region of Batang Regency, Central Java. Research findings indicate that educational and religious practices in Islamic boarding schools reflect the concept of ta'dib (religious guidance), the integration of knowledge and faith, and an awareness of the Islamic worldview as developed by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. Collective traditions such as the study of Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn (Islamic teachings), bahtsul masail (religious discourses), manaqiban (religious recitation), and khataman (religious recitation) shape the spiritual orientation of underprivileged communities, allowing religion to be understood not merely as a ritual but as a source of serenity, social solidarity, and resilience. The attitude of nrimo (respect for God), accompanied by effort, gratitude, and mutual support, demonstrates the internalization of adab (good manners) in daily life, particularly in respect for knowledge, scholars, and education. This awareness is also evident in the motivation of parents who continue to strive to send their children to Islamic universities despite facing economic constraints. They understand education as a continuous charity, a path of worship, and a means of developing civilized individuals with a future orientation and moral responsibility. The choice of sharia, da'wah, and Islamic education demonstrates the belief that knowledge must bring blessings and social benefits. This finding challenges the habits of modern society which views happiness through material accumulation, but through inner peace, strengthening of faith, and the pursuit of knowledge as a spiritual path to God's pleasure.*

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Keywords: *Generation X, Islamic Boarding School Learning, Islamic Educational Philosophy, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas.*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk merekonstruksi konsep filsafat pendidikan Islam dari perspektif Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas dan menganalisis implikasinya terhadap motivasi orang tua Generasi X untuk melanjutkan pendidikan anak-anak mereka hingga ke jenjang pendidikan tinggi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain fenomenologis, memanfaatkan wawancara mendalam dan observasi partisipatif dalam komunitas muslim yang berakar pada tradisi pesantren di daerah pegunungan Kabupaten Batang, Jawa Tengah. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktik pendidikan dan keagamaan di lingkungan pesantren merefleksikan konsep *ta'dib*, integrasi ilmu dan iman, serta kesadaran *worldview Islam* sebagaimana dikembangkan oleh Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. Tradisi kolektif seperti kajian *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *bahtsul masail*, manakiban, dan khataman membentuk orientasi spiritual masyarakat kurang mampu sehingga agama dipahami bukan sekadar ritual, melainkan sumber ketenangan, solidaritas sosial, dan ketahanan hidup. Sikap *nrimo* yang disertai usaha, syukur, dan saling mendukung menunjukkan internalisasi adab dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, terutama dalam penghormatan terhadap ilmu, ulama, dan pendidikan. Kesadaran ini juga terlihat pada motivasi orang tua yang tetap berupaya menyekolahkan anak ke perguruan tinggi Islam meskipun menghadapi keterbatasan ekonomi. Mereka memahami pendidikan sebagai amal jariah, jalan ibadah, serta sarana membentuk insan beradab yang memiliki orientasi ukhrawi dan tanggung jawab moral. Pilihan terhadap bidang syariah, dakwah, dan pendidikan Islam memperlihatkan keyakinan bahwa ilmu harus membawa keberkahan dan kemaslahatan sosial. Temuan ini menentang kebiasaan masyarakat modern yang memandang kebahagiaan melalui akumulasi materi, tetapi melalui kedamaian batin, penguatan iman, dan pencarian ilmu sebagai jalan spiritual menuju rida Ilahi.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Filsafat Pendidikan Islam, Generasi X, Pembelajaran Pesantren, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas.*

Introduction

Indonesia, as the world's most populous Muslim-majority country with approximately 240–249 million Muslims or nearly 86% of its population by 2025, faces a significant paradox between Islamic ideals of prosperity and persistent socioeconomic inequality (Lew et al. 2022, 882) Despite religious teachings encouraging believers to pursue welfare and economic advancement, approximately 25.03 million Indonesians, or 8.57% of the national population, still lived below the poverty line in September 2024, with rural poverty (11.03%) remaining substantially higher than urban poverty (6.73%) according to March 2025 BPS data (Azra, 2013, 63–74).

Based on BPS criteria, individuals are categorized as poor when their monthly expenditure is below IDR 535,547, a threshold that nevertheless remains above the international poverty benchmark for low-income countries of US\$2.15 PPP per day (Baharuddin et al. 2025, 148–56). This structural economic hardship forms the central context of this study, particularly in shaping how Muslim families reinterpret educational aspirations and religious motivations within conditions of scarcity. In economically vulnerable households, parents are frequently confronted with difficult decisions regarding whether higher education should be pursued primarily as a worldly investment to improve family mobility and future income,

or as a form of spiritual devotion and obedience to God through the creation of pious, educated offspring whose knowledge may become continuous charity in the afterlife. Such existential tensions demonstrate that poverty is not merely an economic phenomenon, but also a theological and motivational arena that influences how Muslim families negotiate material survival, religious meaning, and intergenerational aspirations (Basis et al. 2025, 34).

Several recent studies have drawn academic attention to the tension between economic and theological motivations. Hasmin et al. (2025, 70) argue that family management based on religious integration can significantly reduce absolute poverty. Yulianti et al. (2018) states that parental involvement in urban areas is higher than in rural areas, influenced by maternal education. Higher education acts as a channel for social mobility but is still hampered by geographical and cultural inequalities (Arifin, 2017, 53–78). Meanwhile, Lusiani et al. (2023, 154–64) found that poor parents' motivations are driven by a culture of shame and a desire to have children, in addition to strict economic strategies.

According to Ferraro et al. (2018, 339–54), the main motivating factors are decent work and improving parental status. However, these studies have not specifically addressed the narrative of investing in this world versus the afterlife as a theological dilemma among rural Indonesians. In fact, it is rural areas that deserve attention because Islam in Indonesia has always spread through remote villages since its inception, thus having a very strong socio-religious foundation (Seubert et al. 2021, 808–23). Therefore, there is an unresolved gap in research that fails to properly address the character of Indonesian Muslims, where religiosity has a cultural, communal, and integrative expression that combines values with every social life, not only about urban or Middle Eastern societies in depth.

Responding to the research gap, this study aims to explore the real motivation of Poor Parents in Indonesia in Fighting for access for children to get higher education, whether a demand from God which will be implemented as His command is like an investment for life after death because based on Islamic teachings pious children are *infāq* that will not go off with time only served until his death or just worldly investment. Will this objective be covered through 3 (three) research questions: 1) What is the religious condition of the poor people in Indonesia that traces the education level of parents and their perspective on worldly life? 2) The implications that life views have on what the purpose of education is for parents who send their children to college; and 3) What are the aspirations of impoverished parents in relation to the outside world, and what do they wish for their children? This research was conducted in three hamlets in Batang Regency, Indonesia, including Geritan Hamlet, Kalilito Hamlet, and Sijaran Hamlet, all three of which are located in Kalirejo Village. The choice of this location was based on the logical reason that the area is an isolated mountainous area, has a high level of religiosity, and represents a typical poor rural community that still holds fast to traditional values, so it is very relevant to dig deep into the theological narrative in the midst of economic squeeze.

This research is highly urgent because it offers a new perspective in the study

of the sociology of education and religion integrated with the Islamic Philosophy of Education from the perspective of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, which emphasizes education as a process of *ta'dīb*, namely the formation of adab and the proper placement of humans in relation to God, knowledge, and reality (Ahmed 2018, 786–94; Kosim et al. 2021, 250–67). In this framework, poverty is not merely understood as an economic limitation, but also as a condition that shapes the theological construction of parents in making decisions regarding their children's education, especially among Generation X parents whose life experiences were formed during periods of economic uncertainty, limited educational access, and strong religious-cultural traditions. Based on interview samples with Generation X parents, many participants explained that financial hardship encouraged them to prioritize practical economic survival and job security over broader educational ideals, although they simultaneously viewed religion as an essential moral foundation for their children's future. Several interviewees also revealed tensions between choosing modern formal education and religious-based schooling, reflecting how socio-historical experiences influence their understanding of knowledge, success, and social mobility (Rodin 2013, 76–87).

Therefore, the findings of this study are important for policymakers and religious institutions in designing educational programs that are not solely material-oriented but also capable of directing society toward the concepts of *ma'rifah* and adab. This article systematically presents the conceptual framework, qualitative interview findings, and theological implications regarding the tension between worldly and hereafter orientations in children's educational decision-making.

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the deep motivation of poor parents in Indonesia in fighting for access to higher education for their children, whether driven by religious values or worldly investment considerations. To achieve this objective, this study employs a qualitative approach using a transcendental phenomenological design. This approach was selected because it is highly relevant for exploring the meaning embedded in participants lived experiences, enabling researchers to understand the essence of the theological and economic struggles directly experienced by the participants (Gill, 2020, 73–94).

The main data collection technique consisted of in-depth unstructured interviews involving ten poor parents who successfully enabled their children to pursue higher education with a minimum bachelor's degree. The selection of these informants was based on their capacity to provide rich and meaningful information regarding educational decision-making amidst economic limitations (Barrett and Twycross, 2018, 63–64).

The analysis followed transcendental phenomenological procedures through horizontalization, identification of significant statements, thematic clustering, and synthesis of textural and structural descriptions to construct the essence of the phenomenon. Key indicators related to spirituality, sacrifice, educational aspirations, and social mobility were extracted from raw interview data through iterative coding, repeated reading, and cross-participant comparison. The research was conducted in the rural area of Batang Regency, representing a religious

agrarian society. To maintain interpretive rigor, researchers applied epoch and continuously recorded reflective field notes to minimize subjective bias during data interpretation.

The criteria for informant poverty refer to the provisions of the Indonesian government, namely expenditure of less than Rp535,547 per month based on the standards of the Central Statistics Agency. Data collection was carried out through interviews for 120 minutes per session, held in three sessions on December 28, 2025, with an average time allocation of 10-20 minutes per informant per session. The interview was conducted in Javanese because it is the mother tongue of the people of Bawang District, Batang Regency, to ensure the comfort and depth of the informant's expression. Audio data is transliterated into Indonesian for ease of reduction and presented in English with the permission of the informant for scientific publications.

In addition to interviews, document analysis was carried out on what basic needs they buy in their daily lives to verify their economic and academic status. Participatory observation was also carried out by researchers by temporarily staying at the location, observing the physical condition of the house, family interaction patterns, and daily religious activities. These observations serve to capture non-verbal contexts that are not spoken in the interview, such as the level of real-life simplicity compared to expense claims. The informant's name is disguised as the initials P1-P10 based on the request of the interviewee to maintain the privacy and security of the informant.

Table 1. Informant Profiles.

No	Initials	Jobs	Gender	Age (Years)	Location	Province
1	P1	Farm Workers	Men	45	Kalilito	Central Java
2	P2	Farmer	Women	46	Kalilito	Central Java
3	P3	Farm Workers	Men	48	Kalilito	Central Java
4	P4	Farm Workers	Men	54	Kalilito	Central Java
5	P5	Farm Workers	Women	52	Sijaran	Central Java
6	P6	Farm Workers	Men	49	Sijaran	Central Java
7	P7	Farm Workers	Men	46	Sijaran	Central Java
8	P8	Farmer	Women	55	Blumah	Central Java
9	P9	Farmer	Men	58	Blumah	Central Java
10	P10	Farmer	Men	43	Blumah	Central Java

Data validation is carried out by source triangulation techniques to ensure the validity of the findings. In the triangulation procedure, in addition to comparing

data between informants in the interview data, it also always matches what is verbally conveyed by the informant in the interview, both with the results of field observations and physical documentation observed by the researcher (Imran and Yusoff 2015, 389–96). If there is a discrepancy between the informant's statement about their economic condition and the fact of the document evidence in the data that the researcher found or the condition of the house that the researcher observed, then the researcher conducts a member check by confirming the problem to the relevant informant.

While analyzing the data, the researchers used the Miles et al. (2014, 1–7) interactive model in three simultaneous streams of activities that took place systematically. First, data reduction, which was carried out from the beginning of data collection, involved the researcher summarizing, choosing the main thing, and focusing on the theme of religious versus economic motivation. Second, the presentation of data in the form of a structured text narrative makes it easier for readers to understand the patterns of relationships between research variables. Third, conclusions and verification are carried out in a systematic manner, where the researcher searches for the meaning behind the reduced data and presents them to answer the research hypothesis. With this model, the analysis of implementation is not just surface descriptive, but seeks to uncover a consistent pattern of the theological dilemmas faced. The entire process of analyzing this research is documented in field notes, which function as a trail audit, so as to ensure that the conclusions have valid and scientific empirical relevance.

Implementation of Concept *Ta'dīb* Naquib al-Attas through Collective Religious Practices in the Pesantren Environment

The findings of this study reveal that the internalization of pesantren traditions, religious collectivism, and reverence toward ulama play an important role in shaping the spiritual orientation of economically disadvantaged communities. In this context, religion is perceived not merely as a ritual obligation, but also as a source of tranquility and happiness amid economic hardship. This can be seen from their commitment to attending Islamic study sessions on the works of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, particularly *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, despite having to allocate time after working as daily laborers (Nuryanti and Hakim 2020, 74–83). Their understanding is often expressed through simple statements such as the important thing is that the heart feels calm and content. Religious values are also contextualized through the *babtsul masail* forum within the Nahdlatul Ulama tradition, which discusses practical social issues including debt, inheritance, and children's education. In addition, traditions such as *manaqiban* and *khataman* further reinforce social solidarity, as community members spontaneously assist whenever others experience hardship (Khasanah 2022, 183–99).

Moreover, the encouragement conveyed during *walimatussafar* ceremonies to pursue higher education is interpreted as both a pathway to dignity and a form of spiritual investment for the afterlife, as reflected in the growing number of

children from underprivileged families who successfully obtain scholarships. In the perspective of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, all these practices reflect the concept of cultivating adab (*ta'dib*), namely the process of forming humans who recognize and place something in the right position hierarchically, both in relation to God, fellow human beings, and science (Attas, 1994, 17; Hidayatullah and Arif 2022, 409; Hidayat and Mulyanto 2023, 865–78; Septoyadi and Akbar 2023, 1–25). The attitude of *nrimo* accompanied by endeavor, gratitude, patience, and mutual support, shows that adab is not only normative, but is internalized in everyday social actions, thus giving birth to spiritual resilience, social cohesion, and future orientation based on education as a real manifestation of civilized people within the framework of Islamic educational philosophy.

The internalization of the scientific tradition of pesantren through the recitation of *Ihya' Ulūm al-Dīn* by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī forms the inner orientation of the poor in depth. At the beginning of the interview, P1 emphasized, “The important thing is that my heart is calm and feels enough,” While P2 said, “Even though I am tired in the rice fields, I still come to pray because there my heart is cool.” This data shows that their participation is not a formality, but rather a psychological necessity. In the daily dynamics, P3 stated, “If you have heard the recitation, it feels like the burden of life is lighter.” P4 added, “It is a reinforcement of our life.” Consistency is present after working as a farm laborer, indicating an effective process of internalizing the values of Sufism. P5 mentioned at the end of the reflection that substance is a little not a problem, as long as it has blessings or a calm heart. P6 also mentioned that “Religion makes me not be easy to discourage.” This evidence indicates that religion has developed into a tangible buffer to withstand economic stress. So, this inner peace is not just a narrative discourse to them; it stems from systematic and repeated spiritual experiences in their everyday lives.

This illustrates how religion can provide collective problem-solving (even without faith), as the religious collectivity is based on the *babtsul masail* forum hosted by Nahdlatul Ulama. Reflecting on this, P7 mentioned that “If there is a problem, we bring it to the deliberation so as not to make a mistake.” P8 remarked that “The forum makes you feel like you’re not alone in difficult situations.” This indicates a sense of social security that is gained through the legitimacy of faith. P9 explained, “Religion offers a solution, not just prayer,” during the deliberation process. Then P10 added, “We learn to find solutions according to the guidance of the ulama.” This discourse empowers value-based social regulation. At the conclusion of the assessment, P1 indicated that “The debt was discussed together to be fair.” While P2 noted that “We asked about the inheritance so as not to cause conflict.” The supporting data indicates that religious forums are a real instrument in the prevention of conflict and strengthening social cohesion. Thus, the practice of religious deliberation yields operational and measurable social resilience.

The *manaqiban* and *khataman* traditions communicate social solidarity in living community practices. During the opening beginning of observation, P3 mentioned: “If there is a neighbor in distress, we immediately participate in a joint venture.” P4 added that “*Manaqiban* is not only prayer but also mutual help.” This

data suggests that collective rituals have a literal economic dimension. In activity dynamics, P5 delivered the following narrative: “When I was sick, I was helped; I realized that it was because of the pilgrims’ care.” P6 said, “We feel like a big family.” All this solidarity makes for effective social capital in groups who are vulnerable. P7 at an interview’s end said, “No one is left alone.” P8 reported, “It made us closer and look out for each other.” This additional evidence further substantiates the idea that religion acts as an adaptive community protection mechanism. So, the spiritual resilience fostered in the pesantren tradition is transmogrified into social resilience materialized on economic vulnerability.

Educational orientation as an investment in the hereafter is also an important indicator in the findings of this study. At the beginning of the discussion, P9 stated, “Even though I am a farm laborer, my children must go to high school.” P10 added, “Education is a provision for the future of this world and the hereafter.” This data shows a transcendent vision for the future of the next generation. In further explanation, P1 said, “We are willing to work harder for the sake of tuition.” While P2 said, “Scholarships are a hope for small families like us.” The increase in the number of children continuing their studies is supported by empirical data. At the end of the interview, P3 emphasized, “Children should not be like their parents who are all lacking.” P4 said, “Science makes life more directed.” These findings show that education is understood as a means of social mobility as well as spiritual glory. Thus, material poverty does not hinder the birth of a long-term orientation based on religious values.

The attitude of *nrimo* but still strives to be a psychological indicator of people’s inner resilience. At the beginning of the reflection, P5 stated, “life is simple, but we are grateful,” and P6 added, “the important thing is halal and sufficient.” This data reflects the acceptance of keeping in mind the truth of the situation without losing the spirit of effort. “People should not envy the rich,” P7 noted about daily dynamics, and P8 stated, “Sustenance is already arranged.” This viewpoint leads to a steady regulation of emotions. P9 states at the end of the interview, “We are still trying even though the results are small,” and P10 ends with “The important thing is not to abandon worship.” These support data demonstrate that religion itself is an internal mechanism guiding behavior, feeling, and orientation in life. Thus, religious practices are internalized as spiritual resilience, social solidarity, and existential happiness under material constraints.

Naquib al-Attas’ Concept of Integrating Science and Faith as a Basis for Parents’ Theological Motivation in Providing Higher Education for Children

The results of this study indicate that parents’ motivation to send their children to Islamic studies universities is more strongly based on theological motivation and religious values orientation than mere pragmatic economic considerations, which is conceptually aligned with the idea of integrating knowledge and faith in the Islamic educational philosophy developed by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (Ahmad 2025).

In al-Attas's perspective, education functions not only as a transfer of knowledge, but also as a process of instilling good manners that lead humans to recognize and acknowledge God, so that knowledge is inseparable from spiritual values. This is reflected in empirical findings that parents consistently use religious narratives such as the concept of charity, the obligation to pursue religious knowledge, and the belief that deepening Islamic knowledge is a form of worship and moral responsibility in educating children. In fact, their commitment remains strong despite facing economic constraints, indicating that educational orientation is not based solely on instrumental rational logic, but rather on transcendental awareness (Attas, 1981, 45; Iman 2025, 81).

The choice of study programs such as sharia, Islamic education, and da'wah also demonstrates an orientation toward blessings and socio-religious benefits, which aligns with the concept of knowledge as serving to bring goodness to individuals and society. Furthermore, the family decision-making process, which places greater emphasis on values, etiquette, and religious character formation than on cost-benefit analysis, further emphasizes that education is understood as a means of developing civilized individuals (*insān adabi*) (Musa 2021), as emphasized by al-Attas. Thus, these findings overall indicate that the integration of knowledge and faith is not merely a normative concept but has been internalized in the social practices of parents, where Islamic higher education is viewed as a strategic space for strengthening religious identity, building spiritual awareness, and attaining divine approval.

This research confirms that theological orientation is the main foundation in parents' decisions to send their children to universities in the field of Islamic studies. "I want my child to study religion so that his life is blessed and can be a charity for parents," said P1, marking the strong spiritual dimension in the family's educational aspirations. In line with that, P2 states, "If children understand religion, it is a provision for the hereafter, not just a matter of work," which shows that education is understood beyond the interests of economic pragmatism. Data instrumentation indicates that the use of merit *jariah* and study obligations as a basis for decision-making is commonly practiced. They believe that the Islamic universities are still seen as a place to submit faith and strengthen their identity.

During interviews, P4 confirmed, "Religious knowledge is an obligation, so we feel responsible to send our children to the Islamic major and P7 remarked, "Even though I am a farm worker, I want my children to become pious and useful." The condition exhibits a fusion of socioeconomics with spiritual idealism. P8 states, "We believe that when children learn sharia or Islamic education, their lives will be more ordered," and P10 ends with the conviction, "We do not think too much about salary later; what is important is all about Allah's pleasure. These data all confirm that the theological dimension is the principal meaning framework in directing what educational aspirations parents have.

Aside from its theological dimension, the dedication to funding education further demonstrates the might of religious values orientation within families. This illustrates the existence of spiritual priorities in the midst of economic limitations.

P3 said, “My income is not fixed, but my children try their best for religious studies.” P5 statement: “The need for houses has been mined so that children can still study at the da’wah department.” In empirical data, education financing is seen as a component of worship and moral responsibility. Economic rationality is also addressed, but it does not stand as the main metric in decision-making.

P6 claims in the midst of the interview that “It is better for it to be harder than for my child not to study religion,” while P9 asserts, “The cost is heavy yet if it’s an intention of worship from you then Allah will assist you.” This outlook strengthens the family’s resilience under financial strain and is rooted in religious beliefs. Finally, P1 reiterates at the end, “With religious science we do not calculate profit loss,” and P2 concludes, saying, “Sustenance can be searched for, but the alert to learn religion is found constantly.” These findings support the claim that even large economic sacrifices are made based on strong theological convictions, rather than mere calculations of short-term material gains.

In addition, the nature of study programs latches onto a specific Islamic scholarship, which reinforces a religious type of purpose in education. P8 also expresses his vision of social and religious contribution: “I encourage children to enter Islamic education, then they can teach and preach.” This statement is still in accordance with point 4, saying that if you learn sharia, children can help the community in religious affairs. The findings suggest that the blessing and benefits of ummah are still better than income prospects in consideration. Islamic universities are seen as a place for the formation of religious identity, not only in a religious sense but also socially.

P7 emphasized, “We want [the children] to be preachers who sow goodness.” P10 noted that in terms of the discipline, “the religion department brings more blessings than just a general major.” This orientation reflects the family’s internalization of Islamic idealism. In the end, P3 says, “world science is important but religious science is a priority.” P5 notes, “We are proud that our children study in Islamic universities because it helps preserve family values.” These outcomes indicate that discipline as a choice is determined by the better theological knowledge that puts more worth on devotion and faith sustainability.

The thinking choice of education in the family also reflects value domination, which can help to generate religious morals. P6 states, “We talk at home; importantly, it is to remain close to religion,” articulating an atmosphere of discussion cloaked in spiritual values. P2’s statement was in agreement, “First morals, before education,” reinforcing the earlier remark. There is a second way in which, according to data, manners and faith are formed and displayed first in family deliberations. Cost-benefit analysis is not repudiated but rather made secondary. During this, in the middle of the interview, P9 speaks out, “If the child is in a religious school, then we feel our peace and contentment.” D1 says, “We want to make sure that child will spend their life accordingly.” A parent’s inner peace is often the most potent metric for judging educational success. P8 says, “Our thoughts are not just about work but also character.” P4 adds that religious science teaches children boundaries and responsibilities. These outputs show Islamic universities as a place for children to

internalize morals and religion sustainably.

The data reveals a complex interplay between deeper theological considerations, the importance of economic sacrifice and, at times, a desire for character-building vision from two sets of parents. For example, “I hope that children will be the pride of the family because their knowledge is useful” (P7), confirming a social usefulness orientation. This aligns with P3, which proclaims religious science will “Protect children from bad influences.” Islamic higher education is in fact viewed both as a moral bulwark and a means of gaining Divine pleasure. P5 said, “We want children to bring goodness for society.” While P10 mentioned, “If the children are close to religion, then their life will be safer, God willing (God Wills).” Education changed in focus, with spiritual salvation and social contribution as the dominant orientation. P2 ends with the statement, “Religious education makes parents’ hearts more peaceful,” and P9 concludes by stating his conviction that “We believe true success is not just a matter of material things.” Overall, this data indicates that the theological dimension and Islamic idealism function as the main interpretive framework in interpreting children’s higher education.

Islamic Worldview Awareness in Understanding Children’s Happiness and Education as a Spiritual Path for Parents

The implications of this theological view on the inner condition and meaning of parents’ happiness can be more deeply understood when connected to the concept of Islamic worldview consciousness as articulated by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas in Islamic philosophy of education. Al-Attas emphasizes that a true understanding of knowledge must be rooted in a worldview that integrates faith (*īmān*), knowledge (*‘ilm*), and righteous action (*‘amal*) as a unified consciousness directed toward recognizing the ultimate reality of Allah. In this context, the parents’ orientation toward life—marked by transcendence, patience, and hope—reflects not merely cultural or emotional tendencies, but a manifestation of a deeply internalized Islamic worldview (Muhaimin and Abidin 2025, 96–111).

Their perception of sending children to higher education as an affirmation of divine promise aligns with the idea that knowledge is not secular or value-neutral, but sacred and oriented toward recognizing truth and justice. This perspective is further reinforced through their engagement with *Iḥyā’ Ulūm al-Dīn* by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, which frames knowledge as light (*nūr*) that guides human existence. Consequently, happiness is not constructed through material accumulation, but through alignment with divine purpose, where children’s education becomes a form of *ibadah* and a continuation of spiritual legacy (Momen and Ullah 2025, 160–75). The attitude of *nrimo ing pandum* combined with persistent effort reflects a balanced epistemology between acceptance of divine decree and human responsibility, which resonates with al-Attas’ notion of *adab* as the proper placing of things in their rightful order. Ultimately, this worldview consciousness transforms parental sacrifice into a meaningful spiritual journey, where educational aspirations are inseparable from eschatological hope, reinforcing that true happiness lies in attaining inner peace (*sakīnah*) grounded in

faith and the pursuit of knowledge as a means to approach the Divine.

The theological orientation (and belief in life after death) of parents has created a boundless transcendence or mystery of pure being rooted in faith as the basis for life happiness. P1 says: "I am just a mere farm worker, but when my children get to go to college it feels like God has made our family the next in line for that God of status." This perspective recognizes that the measure of educational success in one generation is the assured promise of a Divine endowment for those who attain knowledge, rather than simply a cardiovascular muscle-making. When rivals up there fight for big loot in daily practice, economic sacrifice translates as the shrine of worship which brings inner peace. P2 said, "I believe science is light, so even the rice field is small but wide that my heart because I teach children," not in an interview. Evidence from the field shows that resource limits do not amputate moral and spiritual support for children. They have to limit the consumptive needs of the family, but parents still prioritize and put education as a top priority. P3 also stated, "Tiredness in the field feels light when you remember that children are studying for knowledge," which shows how they transformed the meaning of work from solely earning a living into part of the campaign (*jihād*) in religion. Just as patience and *tawakkul* bolster their emotional resilience amid volatile pressure on education costs. In conclusion, P4 said: "College is not a style; it is an opportunity to please Allah." Thus, a parent's happiness is tied closely to the spiritual belief that education is a pathway to peace of mind and blessings beyond material measures.

Moreover, the internalization of scientific virtue value creates the deep inner dimension of parent-child education. P5 begins his reflection by saying, "We don't have a whole lot of money, but if you are a high school kid, that's good enough." This belief is reinforced by the tradition of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī reciting the book of *Ihya' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, which considers knowledge as light in life and a path to glory. Here education is framed as an investment in charity for a posthumous course. As P6 mentioned during the discussion, "At any time I pay UKT as worship." These financial burdens were articulated in the form of religious devotion. Ranked income coincides with the harvest season, but commitment to education has not diminished, according to observational data. This orientation spawns continual gratitude and hope for the child's future.

P7 added, "In our recitation, we are taught that knowledgeable people are glorified, so I want children to feel that." The internalization of faith through regular and collective religious practice instills within people the dimension of life that is happiness because knowing God becomes, in one way or another, a part of themselves. P8 explained at the end of the interview, "I didn't finish school, but I want my children to be closer to science and religion." So, happiness in life is not measured anymore by material possessions; it is measured by the success of guiding children along the path of knowledge, which is believed to bring lasting fulfillment.

The *nrimo ing pandum* attitude and understanding of toughness are an inner condition characteristic of parents. P9 opens his remarks with, "I believe Allah sees

our efforts,” which underscores how the *tawakkul* dimension informs every family economic decision. The embrace of limits is not seen as naked capitulation, rather spiritual insight combined with maximum effort. In the economics of college funding, families recalibrate spending priorities to preserve their children’s studies and sustainability. P10 says during the interview, “We are farmers, but our prayers are high so that children become useful people.” Field data suggests that at the family level, consumption patterns are generally simple and less expensive, which is adjusted for stability of education fee payments.

According to P1: “I work from morning until late evening; it is meant so my children do not need to labor as hard as I have been,” emphasizing the intergenerational aspect in sacrifices made. Emotional resilience is built upon a personal philosophy that every trial and tribulation includes lessons and rewards. P2 explained at the end of his reflection: “If sustenance is small, we arrange it so that we can continue paying for the children’s educational fees.” Hence, the happiness of a parent’s life is composed of acceptance of the wishes/desires of God and real efforts, so that children’s growing up is a hope for a better tomorrow or sustainable peace in mind

Spiritual pride, based on the worldliness of their children, intention to interpret beyond success is an experience for parents. P3 started his speech saying, “It is okay to live a simple life but always allow the child to keep learning.” For it is one that emphasizes that family orientation is not a structure by the symbol of material establishment but rather the sustainability of values and morality. P4 said, “I’m proud not because of the degree but because of the struggle”, in mid-interview; such a statement illustrates that transformation through the educational process is more important than formal results. Families actively offer emotional support and incorporate prayer as a spiritual strategy against economic stress, according to observational data.

P5 states, “If a child is successful, it’s like our prayers have been answered,” reflecting the interaction between hope and eschatological quality. This orientation enhances family solidarity, since every member is involved in the common battle. Happiness in life is interpreted as the success of carrying out the mandate of parents from a religious perspective. At the end of the interview, P6 confirmed, “I believe that every drop of sweat for a child’s education has a reward.” Thus, the pride that arises is not only social, but spiritual, because education is understood as a way of blessings and continuity of rewards that are believed to have eternal value.

Overall, these findings confirm that children’s education is at the center of the transformation of the meaning of life of parents of farm workers and farmers. P7 began his reflection by stating, “I want children to be people who are useful to society.” The statement shows a social-spiritual orientation that places usefulness as the main indicator of happiness. In daily practice, support for education is manifested through savings, extra work, and consistent prayer. P8 said in the middle of the interview, “Even though life is simple, I feel rich because I have hope,” which shows the psychological dimension of happiness that is not dependent on material. Research data show that the success of children continuing their studies is

perceived as a form of family blessing and strengthening religious identity. P9 states, “Children who have knowledge are like savings in the hereafter,” emphasizing the dimension of charity in their life orientation. This inner experience gives birth to a sense of peace as well as optimism for the future. At the end of the interview, P10 asserted, “My happiness is to see the child on the right path.” Thus, the happiness of parents’ lives is built from the integration of faith, economic sacrifice, and eschatological expectations, so that children’s education is understood as a path to a deeper and more sustainable meaning of life.

Analysis of the Implications of Pesantren Learning on Gen X’s Motivation to Send Their Children to School from Naquib al-Attas’ Perspective

The findings of this study collectively demonstrate that the implementation of the concept of *ta’dib* by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas in the pesantren environment is manifested through the integration of religious practices, theological motivation, and Islamic worldview awareness in shaping both individual and social orientations. Collective religious traditions such as *pengajian* of *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, *bahtsul masail*, *manaqiban*, and *khataman* not only function as ritual activities but also cultivate inner peace, social solidarity, and spiritual resilience among underprivileged communities, reflecting the internalization of adab in everyday life (Musa 2021, 25).

This is further reinforced by parents’ strong theological motivation in supporting their children’s higher education, where decisions are grounded in values such as *amal jariyah*, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and the belief that education is a form of worship rather than merely an economic investment. Such orientation reflects al-Attas’ concept of *ta’dib*, in which education is not limited to intellectual transmission but serves as a process of cultivating proper adab that integrates knowledge (*‘ilm*), faith (*īmān*), and righteous action (*‘amal*) within the framework of the Islamic worldview. Through this perspective, higher education becomes a practical medium for forming *insān adabī*, namely individuals who can recognize the proper place of God, self, society, and knowledge, while translating Islamic ethical principles into everyday conduct and social responsibility (Arif et al. 2026, 45).

Moreover, parents’ understanding of happiness is deeply rooted in an Islamic worldview that unites spiritual consciousness with concrete moral practice, where children’s education is perceived as a lifelong journey toward divine approval. Attitudes such as *nrimo ing pandum*, patience, gratitude, and continuous effort therefore represent not passive theological ideals, but embodied expressions of adab that guide decision-making, perseverance, and ethical behavior in daily life, illustrating the harmonious balance between acceptance of divine decree and active human agency (Hidayatullah and Arif 2022, 410).

Ultimately, these interconnected practices reveal that education, in this context, transcends material goals and becomes a sacred pathway toward achieving inner tranquility (*sakinah*), social harmony, and eschatological hope.

Through the perspective of Islamic Educational Philosophy put forward

by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, particularly in the concept of *ta'dīb* as a process of cultivating adab that integrates the dimensions of knowledge, faith, and deeds holistically (Mohamed et al. 2025, 83–98; Nadia et al. 2025, 82–92; Jaelani and Nidzom 2026, 1–15; Khotimah and Laksono 2026, 60–75). Within this framework, the theological orientation of traditional Muslim society that makes worldly life a field of worship reflects the success of the *ta'dīb* process, where knowledge is not separated from the ultimate goal of knowing and serving God. The scholarly tradition of Islamic boarding schools that refers to classical works such as Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī through *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, as well as socio-religious practices such as *bahtsul masail*, *manaqiban*, and *khataman*, functions as a medium for internalizing adab that forms a hierarchy of values—placing the hereafter above the material.

In al-Attas' perspective, this shows that society does not experience the secularization of knowledge but is able to place the logic of materialism in a subordinate position to the values of monotheism. The decision of parents to send their children to Islamic universities, despite limited economic conditions, reflects an awareness of adab towards knowledge as a divine mandate, not merely an instrument of social mobility (Mantha and Krishna 2024, 53–64). Thus, the synthesis between theological motivation and economic rationality in this finding is actually a manifestation of the success of the reconstruction of *ta'dīb*, which emphasizes that Islamic education is not only the transmission of knowledge, but the formation of civilized humans (*insān adabī*) who can navigate worldly life without losing their orientation to the afterlife.

If reviewed from some relevant previous studies, these findings can be mapped more specifically. First, Clifford Geertz's (1960, 228–49) research in *The Religion of Java* shows that the santri community combines normative piety with daily socio-economic practices, where religion becomes the main framework of meaning in social action; these findings support the results of current research that places theological motivation as the foundation of life orientation.

Second, Sukandi and Inayah's (2024, 831–42) study of Islam and civil society in Indonesia confirms that traditional Muslim communities are able to adapt to modernity without losing their religious moral base, in line with the finding that the logic of materialism is negotiated, not rejected. Third, the research of Mundiri et al. (2022, 469–78) on pesantren traditions found that the transmission of classical books and the authority of the kiai formed a strong *ukhrawi* orientation; these results were consistent with findings on the role of *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, *bahtsul masail*, and *manaqiban* as a mechanism of value reproduction. Fourth, the study by Nurhasanah et al. (2026, 124) shows that traditional ulema networks build symbolic-religious social solidarity that goes beyond mere economic rationality. Fifth, Bansal's (2026, 1–10) research on the economic morality of farmers emphasizes the existence of subsistence ethics and resistance to the penetration of capitalism, which is parallel to the attitude of *nrimo ing pandum*. However, unlike the five studies, this study presents a novelty through the conceptualization of the subordination of materialism in the theological framework as a form of active

dialectic, not just adaptation or passive resistance.

Based on the novelty of these findings, Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia, such as State Islamic University, State Islamic Religious Institute, or Islamic Colleges, should rearrange their policy orientation and academic governance so as not to be trapped in the logic of educational materialism that places students solely as economic investors in the future. Institutions need to view students from poor Muslim families as a theological mandate as well as a social subject that carries *ukhrawi* ideals and the hope of family transcendence.

Because for traditional mountain communities (Sabila et al. 2026, 1–19), the decision to send children to school is not just a social mobility strategy, but a form of worship and spiritual sacrifice, Islamic universities are obliged to ensure that access to education remains affordable, expand affirmative scholarships, be transparent in financing, and present a curriculum that combines professional competence with the strengthening of ethics and spirituality (Nurhasanah et al. 2026, 124).

Islamic higher education must not only promise degrees and job opportunities but also strengthen its mission of forming knowledgeable people with moral and welfare orientations. Thus, institutions do not only reproduce the educated middle class but maintain the synthesis between the ethos of effort and *ukhrawi* consciousness that has long lived in the tradition of pesantren (Xavier et al. 2026, 24–40). If academic policy favors the sustainability of the study of poor students and maintains the integrity of Islamic values, then Islamic universities will truly become an extension of the hopes of poor families, not a structural burden that erodes their noble ideals.

Conclusion

Based on this discussion, this study concludes that the orientation of traditional Indonesian Muslims in poor mountainous areas cannot be explained solely by economic determinism, as theological motivation is the dominant force shaping educational aspirations, social priorities, and economic behavior. This study finds that poor Muslim communities continue to prioritize Islamic higher education not for immediate economic mobility, but because education is understood as a form of worship, *amal jariyah*, and spiritual investment oriented toward divine pleasure and eternal reward. The findings reveal that pesantren traditions, particularly the influence of classical texts such as *Ihya' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, cultivate a collective worldview in which material success is subordinated to barakah, moral responsibility, and *ukhrawi* consciousness, thereby limiting the penetration of materialistic rationality.

This study also demonstrates that poverty does not automatically generate pragmatic-materialistic behavior but instead strengthens theological rationality as a symbolic form of resistance to the hegemony of capital and secular modernization. The main contribution of this study lies in reconstructing Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' concept of Islamic education through the framework of *ta'dīb*, integrating spiritual consciousness, adab formation, and Islamic worldview awareness into the understanding of educational decision-making among

Generation X Muslim families in rural Indonesia. This reconstruction shows that education is not merely perceived as human capital accumulation, but as the cultivation of *insān adabī* who negotiates material needs under the supremacy of transcendent values.

Consequently, the findings carry important implications for Islamic higher education institutions, particularly in designing scholarship policies that recognize theological motivation as a legitimate educational driver, developing curricula that integrate ethics and spirituality across disciplines, and strengthening campus cultures that nurture worldview consciousness, moral responsibility, and the integration of intellectual, spiritual, and social dimensions of learning. This research has a number of limitations that need to be critically examined. First, the scope of research focused on traditional Muslim communities in mountainous areas with a background of pesantren has led to findings that cannot be generalized widely to all Indonesian Muslim communities, which have very complex social, economic, and cultural diversity. Second, qualitative approaches based on interviews and participatory observation are highly dependent on the subjectivity of the informant and the interpretation of the researcher, so the potential for narrative bias and romanticization of theological values cannot be completely avoided. Third, this study has not integrated quantitative data related to income levels, intergenerational social mobility, or comparisons with urban Muslim communities, so the relationship between theological motivation and materialistic logic has not been tested more comprehensively in a statistical framework.

In addition, the dynamics of digital globalization, labor migration, and changes in the aspirations of the younger generation have not been analyzed longitudinally, even though these factors have the potential to shift the orientation of values in the long term. Therefore, future research needs to expand the scope of the region and involve the design of mixed methods in order to obtain stronger data triangulation. Comparative studies between rural Islamic boarding schools and urban middle-class Muslims are also important to see whether the theological-material synthesis is contextual or universal. A cross-generational longitudinal approach is also needed to capture changes in value orientation more deeply and sustainably.

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