

# **SOCIO-RELIGIOUS APPROACHES IN EMPOWERING PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME IN INDONESIA**

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## **Abstract**

Problems of parents of children with Down syndrome often face various challenges, ranging from child health problems and limited access to adequate education to social stigma that is still strong in society. Down syndrome is a genetic condition that occurs due to the presence of an extra copy of chromosome 21, which causes delays in physical and intellectual development. This situation can cause significant psychological distress and requires an appropriate mentoring strategy. This research aims to examine the social-religious approach to empowering parents of children with Down syndrome in Indonesia. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. The results showed that the social-religious approach in empowering parents of children with Down syndrome can be done by providing social assistance for children and parents with Down syndrome as well as for other people and institutions in need, developing the talents and skills of children with Down syndrome by giving them various skills classes, holding psychology and doctor seminars for children with down syndrome, listening to tausyiah, praying in congregation and reciting the Koran.

**Keywords:** *Socio-religious Approaches to Children with Down's Syndrome, Spiritual Support, Skill Development.*

### Abstrak

Problematika orang tua dari anak dengan *down syndrome* sering menghadapi berbagai tantangan, mulai dari masalah kesehatan anak, keterbatasan akses pendidikan yang memadai, hingga stigma sosial yang masih kuat di masyarakat. *down syndrome* merupakan suatu kondisi genetik yang terjadi akibat adanya salinan tambahan kromosom 21, kondisi ini menyebabkan keterlambatan dalam perkembangan fisik dan intelektual. Situasi ini dapat menimbulkan tekanan psikologis yang signifikan dan membutuhkan strategi pendampingan yang tepat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pendekatan sosial keagamaan dalam pemberdayaan orang tua anak dengan *down syndrome* di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan sosial keagamaan dalam pemberdayaan orang tua anak dengan *down syndrome* dapat dilakukan dengan cara memberikan bantuan sosial untuk anak dan orang tua *down syndrome* serta untuk orang dan lembaga lain yang membutuhkan, mengembangkan bakat serta keterampilan anak *down syndrome* dengan memberikannya berbagai kelas keterampilan, mengadakan seminar psikologi dan dokter untuk anak *down syndrome*, mendengarkan tausiyah, sholat berjamaah dan mengaji.

**Kata Kunci :** *Pendekatan Sosial Keagamaan Anak Down Syidrom, Dukungan Spiritual, Pengembangan Keterampilan.*

### A. Introduction

Humans are inherently meant to live side by side, maintaining connections and communicating well with one another without discriminating based on ethnicity, race, or religion. Humans are social beings, meaning they always need others for survival. Humans live in groups, both formally and informally. The most minor form of a group in society is called a family. Speaking of family, it consists of parents, namely father and mother, and children living in the same house. The presence of a child in a family is a long-awaited blessing for parents in every marriage. A

child is the greatest gift given by God to humans and represents the most significant trust for parents who desire them.

Every parent wants their child to be born in a normal condition, but in reality, not all children are born every day, and some are born with special needs, one of which is children with Down syndrome. There are more than 300.000 individuals with Down syndrome in Indonesia. Down syndrome, as a genetic disorder that affects physical and intellectual development, requires comprehensive support from various aspects, including social and spiritual support.<sup>1</sup>

Given the many factors that cause Down syndrome, parents are required to be able to prevent it with the existing knowledge and information. Parents are the main factor, having an important role in the development of each child. As the primary teachers for their children, many parents know how to educate and pay attention to normal children. However, many parents still do not know how to educate and face children with Down syndrome due to a lack of information and knowledge. This can result in children merely surviving but not being able to interact and sometimes not understanding anything.<sup>2</sup>

The problems faced by parents of children with Down syndrome often involve various challenges, ranging from child health issues and limited access to adequate education to strong social stigma in the community. This situation can create significant psychological stress and requires appropriate support strategies. This is where the role of religious social empowerment becomes crucial. Empowerment can be understood as efforts to build the

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<sup>1</sup>Renawati, Rudi Saprudin Darwis, dan Hery Wibowo, "Interaksi Sosial Anak Down Syndrome Dengan Lingkungan Sosial (Studi Kasus Anak Down Syndrome Yang Bersekolah di SLB Pusppa Suryakanti Bandung)," *Prosiding Penelitian dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 4, no. 2 (2017): 252–56, <https://doi.org/10.24198/jppm.v4i2.14341>.

<sup>2</sup>Agustyaati, "Psychology of Education for Children with Special Needs" (Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2009), 12.

community's capacity by encouraging, motivating, and raising awareness of their potential and developing it into real action.<sup>3</sup>

Research also discusses Down syndrome with the title; the study aims to describe the process of career guidance services in increasing the independence of children with Down syndrome. Career guidance services that are carried out are guidance provided from the mentoring process, as well as skills learning that focuses on teaching skills to foster and develop potential within themselves to become independent. The results of career guidance services that have been implemented are less than optimal due to many factors, including teachers who are not professionals from psychologists or counselors but member empowerment, unsystematic guidance services, giving Down syndrome children who are easily bored and tired, parents who participate in completing children's tasks, not focusing on one skill all children are always included in all skills training.<sup>4</sup>

Religious social empowerment encompasses various activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of individuals or groups to understand, apply, and integrate religious values into daily life. In the context of parents of children with Down syndrome, this means providing them with the knowledge, skills, and support they need to effectively accompany their children while still practicing and teaching religious values. Additionally, religious communities often provide close social networks, allowing parents to share experiences, get advice, and feel a sense of togetherness in facing similar situations. This support can provide greater confidence and optimism for parents and strengthen family bonds.

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<sup>3</sup>Zubaedi, *Alternative Builder Discourse: Various Perspectives on Development and Community Empowerment* (Jakarta: Ar-Ruzz, 2007), 54.

<sup>4</sup>Danang Prasetyo, "Career Guidance Services in Increasing the Independence of Down Syndrome Children at the Information and Activity Center Foundation for the Association of Parents of Down Syndrome Children (PIK POTADS) Rajabasa Bandar Lampung" (Lampung: Thesis Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences UIN Raden Intan Lampung, 2021).

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of religious social empowerment programs in improving the psychological and spiritual well-being of parents of children with Down syndrome. With a better understanding of the role and impact of these interventions, it is hoped that more effective strategies can be developed to support families with children with Down syndrome and reduce the psychological and social burden they face. Through this approach, it is hoped that not only parents will benefit but also children with Down syndrome can experience a more supportive and inclusive environment. So, this research aims to examine the concept of community empowerment. What is the concept of Down syndrome? Moreover, how is the Social Religious Approach to Empowering Parents of Children with Down syndrome in Indonesia?

## **B. Method**

This research was conducted at the Association of Parents of Down Syndrome Children (POTADS) Foundation in Bandar Lampung City, with a type of qualitative research that is descriptive and uses a sociological approach. The data sources in this study consist of two primary and secondary sources, primary data in this study is in the form of information from the chairman of the POTADS foundation, information from POTADS members, and information from ADS parents and residents around the POTADS Foundation, and secondary data in the form of library data, such as books, journals and articles relevant to the research.

Data collection methods through direct observation, unstructured interviews, and documentation using a purposive sampling method. Informants in this research are people who have and understand the information needed in writing, including the chairman and members of POTADS Lampung, and then use the inductive method in the conclusion-drawing process.

## **C. Results and Discussion**

### **1. Community Empowerment**

Community empowerment or development refers to planned and systematic efforts undertaken by, for, and within the

community to improve the population's quality of life in all aspects of their lives within a unified area.<sup>5</sup>Efforts to improve the quality of life and living in a unified area imply that community development is carried out with environmental awareness, human resources, and social and local cultural considerations in an organized manner. This means that the development process in a particular area must be planned in such a way that sustainable community development is realized in accordance with the issues faced and the needs of the community's real life. This understanding emphasizes the existence of a group of people (*khairu ummah*) who act professionally for the benefit of the community. Community empowerment is an effort to develop a strategy based on a concept focusing on the community as a development goal. Community empowerment must also be carried out following planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Community empowerment is a process in which individuals and groups are provided with the skills, knowledge, and resources needed to improve their quality of life and participate more actively in decision-making that affects their lives. This concept is rooted in the principle of participation, where the local community is given an active role in the development process so that they are not just objects but also subjects of the desired social change.

Furthermore, community development is understood as efforts to raise awareness and instill understanding in the community so that they can better utilize all their capabilities, both natural and human resources, and to encourage local initiatives to invest more in achieving better welfare.<sup>6</sup>This definition emphasizes the level of community awareness to cooperate (*ta'awwun*) by increasing their self-awareness to bring about change and community development by utilizing the existing community potential, both physical and non-physical, to be developed to the maximum extent possible.

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<sup>5</sup>Abu Suhu, et al, *"Islam Da'wah and Social Welfare"* (Yogyakarta: Faculty of Da'wah UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2005).

<sup>6</sup>Anonymous, *Community Organizing Development* (Jakarta, 2011), 41.

One important aspect of community empowerment is capacity building, which involves training and education to strengthen the community's skills and knowledge. This can include various activities, such as job skills courses, entrepreneurship training, or health education. The goal is for community members to identify and take advantage of existing opportunities and to address the challenges they face more effectively.

Participation in decision-making is also a key element of community empowerment. This means giving the local community a voice in the planning and implementing of programs or policies that affect them. In this way, they can express their needs and aspirations, ensuring that interventions are relevant and practical. This process also helps build a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members, which can enhance the sustainability of programs.

Additionally, community empowerment often involves increasing access to resources such as capital, technology, and social services. By improving this access, communities can become more self-reliant and develop local solutions to their problems. For example, economic empowerment programs that provide access to microcredit or agricultural technology can help farmers increase their yields and income.

In general, community development is a long process that has stages that must be carefully prepared to achieve the targets achieved in community development activities as planned. Five stages are offered, including:

- a. Identifying service providers or funding sources.
- b. Conducting systematic studies on the problems faced.
- c. Holding meetings in forums or consultations involving as much community participation as possible.
- d. Forming organizations and establishing structures and members.
- e. Operational implementation
- f. Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the new body's tasks.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>JimIfe, *Community Development* (Australia: Malbourn, 1997), 43.

## 2. *Down Syndrome*

Down syndrome is a condition of developmental delay in children, affecting both physical and mental development, caused by chromosomal abnormalities, according to Cuncha as cited in Mark L. Batshaw, M.D. According to Bandi (1992), children with mental disabilities generally have more severe abnormalities compared to other disabilities, especially in their intelligence. Nearly all cognitive abilities of children with mental disabilities are affected, such as slow learning, difficulty solving problems, and poor ability to understand cause-and-effect relationships, making their performance significantly different from that of other children. Children with mental disabilities are characterized by weak motor control and poor coordination, but they can still be trained to achieve abilities close to normal levels. Other signs include holding books close to their eyes when reading, always keeping their mouth open, taking a long time to understand concepts, having sensory difficulties, and experiencing speech and verbal development delays.

Down syndrome (mongoloid) is a condition where additional genetic material causes developmental delays in children, sometimes referred to as mental retardation. Children with Down syndrome have an abnormality in chromosome 21, which consists of three chromosomes (trisomy 21) instead of the usual two, disrupting genetic information and causing physical deviations. In the past, individuals with Down syndrome were referred to as having mongolism or being mongoloid, a term that arose because they resembled people of Asian descent. This term has become outdated, and we now use the term Down syndrome.<sup>8</sup>

Seguin first identified this abnormality in 1844, but the clinical signs of this condition were first recognized in 1866 by Dr. John Langdon Down. Because of the peculiar characteristics such as relatively short stature, small head, and flat nose resembling Mongoloid people, it was often referred to as mongolism. This

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<sup>8</sup>Fadhli, *Smart Book of Children's Health* (Yogyakarta: Anggrek Library, 2010), 13.



condition was later named Down syndrome to avoid offending the Mongol people.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Socio-religious Approaches in Empowering Parents of Children with Down syndrome

The social-religious approach in empowering parents of children with Down syndrome focuses on strengthening spiritual, emotional, and skill aspects through various integrated activities. This program includes socialization of Down syndrome to increase understanding and income, social assistance to ease the economic burden, and development of children's talents and skills to grow optimally. In addition, seminars with psychologists and doctors provide scientific insights on handling and developing children with Down syndrome. Within the religious framework, activities such as listening to *tausiyah*, praying in congregation, and reciting the Quran become a means to strengthen faith, strengthen solidarity, and provide emotional support to parents.

**Table 1.1**  
Socio-religious Approaches in Empowering Parents of Children with Down syndrome

No	Forms of Social-Religious Approach in Empowerment
1	Down syndrome socialization
2	Social Assistance
3	Developing Talents and Skills
4	Psychology and Doctors Seminar on Child Down syndrome
5	Listening to Tausiyah
6	Blessed Sholat
7	Studying The Qur'an

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<sup>9</sup>Suryo, *Human Genetics*, Cet ke IX (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University press, 2008), 25.

a. Down syndrome socialization

Social empowerment of the parents' association of children with Down syndrome includes services such as conducting awareness campaigns about Down syndrome within the community. These efforts typically involve seminars, workshops, and visits. For instance, the chairman and officials of the Down Syndrome Parents' Association in Bandar Lampung conducted a seminar in Metro City. During these events, the association's officials provide insights into Down syndrome, covering its characteristics and caregiving methods and advocating for equal rights for individuals with Down syndrome, both within families and society.

Moreover, these sessions often showcase the talents of children with Down syndrome to demonstrate their abilities, aiming to foster acceptance in various aspects like education and employment. While their differences are acknowledged, the goal is to promote inclusivity and not discrimination. The social empowerment efforts through religious activities for parents of children with Down syndrome aim to provide moral, spiritual, and informative support. Participants share experiences, challenges, and solutions in caring for their children. These activities typically include group discussions, seminars, and workshops facilitated by religious leaders, psychologists, and healthcare professionals knowledgeable about Down syndrome.

Furthermore, these initiatives incorporate religious elements such as communal prayers, religious studies, and lectures, strengthening faith and providing parents with hope and mental resilience. This approach focuses on spiritual aspects and builds a robust support network among parents facing similar challenges. It facilitates access to therapeutic options, inclusive education, and optimal healthcare services. Overall, these awareness activities aim to enhance the quality of life for children with Down syndrome and their families through comprehensive support encompassing social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions.

b. Social Assistance

Social assistance provided by the Down Syndrome Parents' Association in Bandar Lampung involves non-continuous aid given to specific individuals or institutions. This assistance usually comes in the form of monetary or material support aimed at helping both individuals and the broader community. The social assistance programs implemented by the association are diverse, catering to the needs of children with Down syndrome and their families and extending support beyond their membership.

Specific assistance for children with Down syndrome includes several aspects: Firstly, financial aid and necessities are provided to needy families. These funds often come from collaborations with social service departments or other social organizations like the PUTI Foundation (Perkumpulan Umat Tao Indonesia), which offers various forms of aid such as cash, groceries, and even musical instruments like pianos to support music learning among children with Down syndrome at the Down Syndrome Parents' Association Secretariat in Sukabumi, Bandar Lampung.

Secondly, social assistance in healthcare facilities is another critical support area. This includes recommendations and accompanying healthcare treatments for Down syndrome children at hospitals and the provision of free health check-ups such as ear examinations, dental check-ups, and hydrotherapy. These activities are carried out through partnerships with hospitals and volunteer groups of doctors engaged in social activities.

Apart from assistance specifically aimed at children with Down syndrome, the association also engages in activities benefiting others outside its immediate circle. This includes sharing knowledge about Down syndrome itself. While the Down Syndrome Parents' Association in Bandar Lampung primarily focuses on children with Down syndrome within their foundation, they have also extended financial support and necessities to orphanages like Darma Sari and Miftahul Jannah. Additionally, the association has participated in disaster relief efforts by collecting gently used clothing from its members, parents, and children with

Down syndrome to donate to disaster victims. The association continually carries out these social activities in the form of assistance.

Social assistance as a form of religious, social empowerment for parents of children with Down syndrome is an integral effort aimed at improving the quality of life for these children and supporting their families. These assistance programs typically include financial aid, educational support, and healthcare services explicitly designed to meet the needs of children with Down syndrome. Moreover, these programs often provide training and mentoring for parents to better understand their children's condition, develop specific skills, and access necessary resources to support holistic child development.

The religious social empowerment approach emphasizes the importance of community support and spiritual values. Religious activities such as lectures, support groups, and faith-based social activities are crucial in providing emotional and mental comfort for parents. This spiritual and moral support not only helps alleviate the psychological burden often felt by parents but also strengthens community solidarity in embracing and supporting families with children who have Down syndrome. Thus, religious social assistance serves a dual function, both as a practical empowerment tool and a source of emotional and spiritual support.

### c. Developing Talents and Skills

The Association of Parents of Children with Down syndrome provides space and resources to guide and help develop the talents and skills of children with Down syndrome. The association has established talent classes such as dance, drawing and coloring, swimming, sports, culinary arts, and others at their secretariat to develop these talents. Talent coaching for children with Down syndrome takes place every Saturday, where they are guided and often supported by specialized mentors to enhance their talent development rapidly within the foundation.

In addition to these classes, children with Down syndrome are sometimes taught basic life skills for their daily lives, such as

preparing their meals, helping with washing dishes, cleaning their beds, and assisting with other household chores. The guidance in developing talents in arts and sports has yielded significant results. Children with Down syndrome from the association now possess talents and are gradually becoming more independent. Many children have begun confidently performing in public events such as seminars, workshops, and family gatherings, showcasing their talents in dancing and coloring. Some have even excelled in sports like badminton competitions and events such as Got Talent for children with disabilities. These taught skills also promote their independence.

Developing the talents and skills of children with Down syndrome is a crucial aspect of the social-religious empowerment undertaken by parents. These children have unique potentials that can be developed through appropriate guidance and support. Parents play a pivotal role as primary facilitators in this process, creating a supportive environment for their children. Children can discover their interests and talents through inclusive education and specialized skills programs, whether in arts, music, sports, or practical skills. Consequently, these children gain the ability to be independent and contribute positively to society.

Social-religious empowerment involves spiritual and social aspects that enrich the lives of children with Down syndrome. Parents grounded in religious values can teach the importance of love, patience, and social support in raising their children. Furthermore, involvement in religious communities can provide acceptance and camaraderie, which are crucial for the social development of children. Religious activities such as prayer groups, charitable activities, or religious classes can serve as platforms for children to showcase their talents and feel accepted. This helps boost their self-confidence and gives them an active role in the community, strengthening their identity as valuable and meaningful individuals.

d. Psychology and Doctors Seminar on Child Down syndrome

Social empowerment is organized in collaboration between the Association of Parents of Children with Down syndrome and psychologists and doctors. These seminars are held at the association's center in Bandar Lampung to provide specific understanding, especially to parents of children with Down syndrome, regarding the background of Down syndrome, its characteristics, appropriate medical interventions, ways to support their child's development, and more. Parents can discuss their child's development with the attending doctors and psychologists during these social events. Additionally, they are provided with various motivational supports to maintain their mental well-being, recognizing the crucial role parents play in the lives of children with Down syndrome.

The social empowerment through seminars facilitated by psychologists and doctors aims primarily to assist parents of children with Down syndrome at the Association of Parents of Children with Down Syndrome. It involves sharing knowledge about caring for children with Down syndrome and providing appropriate medical care. Psychologists are present to strengthen the parents of children with Down syndrome. All these activities are conducted voluntarily as part of a caring initiative for children with Down syndrome.

The Psychology and Doctor Seminars on Down syndrome as a social-religious empowerment for parents of children with Down syndrome is an initiative aimed at providing more profound understanding and holistic support to families. In these seminars, psychologists and doctors collaborate to deliver information on the medical conditions and psychological development of children with Down syndrome. Through presentations and discussions, parents can understand crucial aspects such as healthcare, special education, and strategies to support their children's social and emotional development. The seminars also serve as a platform for parents to share experiences and practical solutions, reducing isolation and fostering a sense of community among them.

Beyond medical and psychological aspects, these seminars emphasize social-religious empowerment as a crucial part of supporting families with children with Down syndrome. This approach involves providing spiritual and moral support, which can greatly aid parents in facing daily challenges. In a religious context, many parents find strength and solace through their religious communities, which provide emotional and spiritual support networks. The seminars include sessions designed to discuss how religious beliefs and practices can be sources of strength, offering hope and building mental resilience for parents. These seminars aim to comprehensively empower parents to provide the best care and support for their children by integrating medical, psychological, and religious knowledge.

e. Listening to Tausiyah

Following and listening to religious sermons (tausiyah) is a religious and social activity at the Association of Parents of Children with Down Syndrome in Sukabumi, Bandar Lampung. The foundation hosts special events every few months through lectures/sermons inviting Islamic scholars (ustad). The themes of the lectures mostly revolve around the uniqueness of disabled children, patience, and other strengthening topics. As we know, religion serves as a latent function for self-strengthening. In this context, sermons serve as a medium for oral information and advice for parents of children with Down syndrome. The functions of these sermons include: first, they can enhance motivation and spirit among parents of Down syndrome children; second, they foster camaraderie among these parents, increase their faith and piety, and serve as self-evaluation for each parent of a child with Down syndrome to remain diligent in aiding the development of their child with Down syndrome.

Listening to sermons as a form of religious and social empowerment for parents of children with Down syndrome has a significant impact on enhancing their emotional and spiritual well-being. Sermons, often containing advice, motivation, and spiritual reinforcement, provide moral encouragement to parents who may face significant challenges in caring for a child with Down

syndrome. Through sermons, they gain a more profound understanding of the meaning of life, patience, and sincerity in accepting their child's condition. This helps them overcome despair or stress, increasing their sense of gratitude and optimism. Thus, sermons serve as a source of spiritual support that strengthens parents' mental and emotional resilience.

Moreover, sermons play a crucial role in religious social empowerment by creating a sense of community and solidarity among parents of children with Down syndrome. While listening to sermons, they often meet other parents who share similar experiences, forming a strong social support network. Sermons delivered within a religious community also emphasize the importance of social support, cooperation, and empathy towards others. This encourages parents to be more active in social and religious activities, expand their social networks, and increase their involvement in the community. As a result, they feel more accepted, supported, and empowered to face the daily challenges of caring for a child with Down syndrome.

f. Blessed Sholat

Congregational prayer is a religious activity conducted by the Association of Parents of Children with Down Syndrome members at the secretariat, where they gather, usually on Saturdays. This activity manifests their religious devotion and is intended to strengthen their faith and piety. During congregational prayer, children with Down syndrome at the association are also taught about their obligations as Muslims. After congregational prayer, the association's administrators often deliver brief religious motivational speeches to inspire and motivate parents and children with Down syndrome.

Congregational prayer, performed collectively in mosques or other places, holds profound meaning in the context of religious social empowerment for parents of children with Down syndrome. Through congregational prayer, these parents fulfill their religious duties and receive emotional and social support from the community. Interacting with other congregants strengthens a sense of community, reduces feelings of isolation, and provides



opportunities to share experiences and receive advice on daily challenges related to caring for children with special needs. Mosque communities often provide a space for dialogue and mutual support, which is invaluable to parents on their journey.

Moreover, congregational prayer offers opportunities for children with Down syndrome to interact and participate directly in religious activities. This can aid their socialization, boost self-confidence, and foster positive social relationships. Their involvement in congregational prayer also strengthens their religious identity, helps them feel a sense of belonging, and integrates them into a larger community. Thus, congregational prayer serves as a means of religious social empowerment that benefits parents and their children, providing an inclusive and supportive environment crucial for their holistic development.

#### g. Studying The Qur'an

Another religious social activity is Quranic recitation, specifically designed to provide religious education. This activity aims to introduce various fundamental aspects of religion, such as prayer, recognition of Arabic letters (*hijaiyah*), teaching the practice of charity, assisting parents, and other virtuous deeds. During Quranic recitation classes, administrators provide guidance and teach children with Down syndrome. In recent years, there has been collaboration with student volunteers to teach Quranic recitation, highlighting the association's awareness of the importance of religious education for the younger generation, including children with Down syndrome. Down syndrome does not hinder their ability to excel in any field, as evidenced by a story shared by one administrator about a child with Down syndrome in Jordan who successfully memorized the entire Quran (*hafidz*) over seven years. This demonstrates that individuals with Down syndrome can achieve remarkable feats like any other child.

Moreover, Quranic recitation serves as an educational medium for parents in nurturing their children, including those with Down syndrome. Through Quranic recitation sessions, parents learn about moral values and ethics that can be applied in daily life, which are crucial for shaping their children's character

from an early age. These sessions often include lectures or studies that discuss effective methods of educating children with special needs, emphasizing inclusive teaching methods and patience. Thus, Quranic recitation not only strengthens the faith and beliefs of parents but also enriches their insights into parenting, ultimately contributing to the positive development of their children.

From the approach taken, it has various direct impacts that affect parents and children with Down syndrome, among others:

- 1) Maintained Emotions
- 2) A socio-religious approach to empowering parents of children with Down syndrome can create positive, guarded emotions. This approach integrates spiritual values and social support from religious communities, which helps parents feel more accepted, understood, and emotionally strengthened. Through prayer meetings, religious studies, or community-based support groups, parents are given space to share their experiences and overcome challenges with greater confidence and hope. This not only reduces stress and anxiety but also encourages gratitude, optimism, and social connectedness, all of which contribute to their emotional well-being in their role as the primary caregiver of a child with Down syndrome.
- 3) Community Recognition Improves
- 4) Through this approach, religious values such as compassion, respect, and social solidarity are instilled in the community, creating greater empathy for the challenges faced by parents and children with Down syndrome. Recitation, interfaith discussions, and faith-based social actions help reduce stigma, strengthen moral support, and expand family social networks. As a result, the community is more accepting and respectful of their existence, boosting parents' confidence and opening up opportunities for children to have an inclusive environment that supports their development.
- 5) Increased Talent and Skills of Children with Down syndrome

- 6) Parents are indirectly equipped with a deep understanding of the importance of love, patience, and spiritual support in guiding children's development. Community-based activities, such as recitation, group therapy, and skills training integrating religious values, help build children's self-confidence and social adaptability. In addition, a loving and spiritual environment creates an atmosphere conducive to nurturing children's potential, allowing them to develop their unique motor, cognitive, and social skills to the fullest.

## **D. Discussion**

### **1. Economic Impact and Empowerment**

The sheep farming program has demonstrably improved participants' economic well-being, a finding consistent with numerous studies on the role of livestock in poverty alleviation.<sup>10</sup> The increased income reported by participants, such as S and K, aligns with Alizai et al.<sup>11</sup> Bhatti et al.'s research suggests that sheep farming can provide reliable financial returns in rural contexts due to its adaptability and relatively low input requirements.<sup>12</sup> Supports the notion that livestock farming can diversify income sources and mitigate financial risks for smallholder farmers, thereby contributing to economic stability in rural areas.

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<sup>10</sup>Gulnaz Hameed et al., "Tracing the Causality between Livestock and Poverty Alleviation in the Rural Economy of Gilgit Baltistan-Pakistan," ed. D. Chalil et al., *E3S Web of Conferences* 52 (August 27, 2018): 00019, <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/20185200019>.

<sup>11</sup>Dr. Abdullah Dostain, Dr. Shahida Habib Alizai, and Dr. Abdul Malik Kasi, "EVALUATE THE LIVESTOCK ROLE FOR POVERTY REDUCTION IN SELECTED DISTRICTS OF BALOCHISTAN PROVINCE," *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* 5, no. 3 (December 25, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.52337/pjia.v5i3.732>.

<sup>12</sup>Muhammad Azher Bhatti et al., "Diversity of Sources of Income for Smallholder Farming Communities in Malawi: Importance for Improved Livelihood," *Sustainability* 13, no. 17 (August 26, 2021): 9599, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13179599>.

However, the economic benefits observed in this study were unevenly distributed, with some participants noting that income gains were largely reinvested into their farming operations rather than leading to immediate improvements in living standards. This finding resonates with Ellis (2000), who argued that rural development initiatives often take time to translate into noticeable household-level changes, especially when participants prioritize investment in productive assets over short-term consumption. Moreover, despite increased production, the lack of significant shifts in local sheep prices suggests that the program's economic effects are still in their early stages and that further integration into local and regional markets is necessary for broader financial impact. Similar challenges related to market access and the commercialization of livestock farming have been documented in studies by Mbatha.<sup>13</sup> And Sehar et al.<sup>14</sup>, emphasizing the importance of market development in ensuring sustainable economic outcomes.

A key limitation highlighted by participants was their restricted access to formal financial services, such as credit and savings mechanisms. This issue mirrors the findings of Hu et al.<sup>15</sup>, who emphasized that financial inclusion is critical for scaling rural agricultural enterprises. Without access to microfinance or subsidized loans, farmers cannot expand their operations or engage in long-term financial planning, thus limiting the potential for economic growth. As Kang and Zhao argued, addressing this gap

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<sup>13</sup>CN Mbatha, "Livestock Production and Marketing for Small Emerging Farmers in South Africa and Kenya: Comparative Lessons," *South African Journal of Agricultural Extension (SAJAE)* 49, no. 1 (April 19, 2021): 141–61, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3221/2021/v49n1a10783>.

<sup>14</sup>Malika Sehar and Abayomi Samuel Oyekale, "Effect of Livestock Farmers' Access to Formal Markets on Marketing Inefficiency in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa," *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development* 14, no. 1 (January 2, 2022): 225–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20421338.2020.1823610>.

<sup>15</sup>Yue Hu, Chang Liu, and Jiangang Peng, "Financial Inclusion and Agricultural Total Factor Productivity Growth in China," *Economic Modelling* 96 (March 2021): 68–82, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econmod.2020.12.021>.

would improve the scalability of sheep farming initiatives and support broader rural development goals.<sup>16</sup> In their analysis of agricultural finance in developing countries.

## 2. Social Impact and Community Cohesion

The literature on community-based development well documents the positive social outcomes of the sheep farming program, particularly its role in strengthening community ties.<sup>17</sup> Participants in this study, including R, reported increased cooperation and mutual support among villagers, reflecting the findings of Mahmudul et al.<sup>18</sup> On the alignment of Islamic values with communal welfare initiatives. The program's ability to reduce social isolation, particularly for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, further supports the notion that inclusive economic activities can foster social equity and cohesion. This is consistent with studies by Wibowo.<sup>19</sup>, who found that Islamic economic principles promote economic and social well-being when integrated into community development programs. As participants suggested, the potential for youth leadership development aligns with recent research advocating for incorporating digital tools and modern management techniques in agricultural programs to engage younger

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<sup>16</sup>Jian Kang and Minjuan Zhao, "The Impact of Financial Development on Agricultural Enterprises in Central China Based on Vector Autoregressive Model," ed. Chin-Ling Chen, *Security and Communication Networks* 2022 (March 31, 2022): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/5629202>.

<sup>17</sup>Takele Mebratu, Wogene Markos, and Abyot Seifu, "Impact of Participation in Community-Based Sheep Breeding Practice on the Income of Household: A Case of Adiyu Woreda, Kaffa Zone, SNNPRS, Ethiopia," *International Journal of Scholarly Research in Engineering and Technology* 2, no. 2 (April 30, 2023): 001–018, <https://doi.org/10.56781/ijset.2023.2.2.0023>.

<sup>18</sup>Alam Md. Mahmudul et al., "Waqf as a Tool for Rendering Social Welfare Services in the Social Entrepreneurship Context," *Global Journal Al Thaqafah* 8, no. 1 (2018): 87–98, <https://doi.org/10.7187/GJATSI2018-06>.

<sup>19</sup>Ari Wibowo, "Enhancing Economic Growth for the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals through Digital Era Fundraising Schemes for Sustainable Community Development: A Policy Analysis from the Islamic Economic Perspective," *Proceeding of International Conference on Islamic Philanthropy* 1 (July 9, 2023): 26–37, <https://doi.org/10.24090/icip.v1i1.301>.

generations.<sup>20</sup>This strategy modernizes traditional farming practices and ensures the long-term sustainability of rural agricultural systems by attracting younger participants.

The ripple effect of the sheep farming program in stimulating other communal initiatives, such as cooperative crop farming, further demonstrates its broader socio-economic potential. This mirrors the findings by Shahidullah<sup>21</sup>, who argued that community-based programs often catalyze broader socio-economic development by fostering collaboration and shared resource management. Such initiatives have the potential to create sustainable livelihoods and enhance the overall resilience of rural communities.

### 3. Program Management and Sustainability

The study's findings indicate that the program's success is closely tied to the support provided by local government authorities, particularly in the form of financial assistance for sheep health maintenance. This finding is consistent with Rykovska.<sup>22</sup>Assertion that government intervention is crucial for sustaining agricultural development initiatives in rural areas. However, participants highlighted several areas for improvement, particularly concerning sheep breeding practices and providing formal training.

Martyniuk notes that the call for better oversight of breeding practices reflects the importance of maintaining livestock

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<sup>20</sup>Dudi Setiadi et al., "Youth's Digital Literacy in the Context of Community Empowerment in an Emerging Society 5.0," *Society* 11, no. 1 (2023): 1–12.

<sup>21</sup>A.K.M. Shahidullah and C. Emdad Haque, "Social Entrepreneurship by Community-Based Organizations: Innovations and Learning through Partnerships," in *Social Enterprise - Context-Dependent Dynamics In A Global Perspective* (InTech, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.5772/62469>.

<sup>22</sup>Oksana Rykovska, "State Support for the Agricultural Sector in the Context of Inclusive Rural Development," *Ekonomika APK* 29, no. 3 (May 19, 2022): 62–72, <https://doi.org/10.32317/2221-1055.202203062>.

quality for long-term program sustainability.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the absence of formal training programs limits participants' ability to fully capitalize on the economic opportunities presented by the sheep farming initiative. Qudsi and Nurhayati<sup>24</sup> Argued that capacity-building initiatives, such as technical training and business management education, are essential for maximizing the benefits of rural agricultural programs. Providing structured training in sheep care, breeding techniques, and financial management could significantly enhance the program's productivity and profitability, as supported by the broader literature on rural education and development.<sup>25</sup>

## **E. Conclusions**

Problems of parents of children with Down syndrome often face various challenges, ranging from child health problems and limited access to adequate education to social stigma that is still strong in society. Down syndrome is a genetic condition that occurs due to the presence of an extra copy of chromosome 21, which causes delays in physical and intellectual development. This situation can cause significant psychological distress and requires an appropriate mentoring strategy. This research aims to examine the social-religious approach to empowering parents of children with Down syndrome in Indonesia. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. The results showed that the social-religious approach in empowering parents of children with Down syndrome can be done by providing social assistance for

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<sup>23</sup>Elzbieta Martyniuk, "Policy Effects on the Sustainability of Animal Breeding," *Sustainability* 13, no. 14 (July 12, 2021): 7787, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13147787>.

<sup>24</sup>Nur Asiyah Qudsi and Sri Nurhayati, "Basic Financial Literacy Training Program as a Rural Communities Empowerment in the Digital Economy Era," *Aksara: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Nonformal* 9, no. 2 (2023): 997–1008.

<sup>25</sup>Rasu Eeswaran et al., "Current and Future Challenges and Opportunities for Livestock Farming in West Africa: Perspectives from the Case of Senegal," *Agronomy* 12, no. 8 (July 31, 2022): 1818, <https://doi.org/10.3390/agronomy12081818>.

children and parents with Down syndrome as well as for other people and institutions in need, developing the talents and skills of children with Down syndrome by giving them various skills classes, holding psychology and doctor seminars for children with Down syndrome, listening to taushiyah, praying in congregation and reciting the Koran.

Future research can expand the socio-religious approach in the context of empowering parents of children with Down syndrome by exploring variations in religious and cultural practices in various regions in Indonesia. as well as more in-depth regarding collaboration between religious institutions, social organizations, and the government in supporting these families can also be a focus to strengthen synergies and create more inclusive empowerment models.

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