THE SYNTHESIS OF SUFISM AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL): STRENGTHENING STUDENT LEADERSHIP RESILIENCE IN MARGINALIZED MADRASAHS

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the management of holistic Islamic education in the context of structural poverty by integrating Sufism, mindfulness, and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) to strengthen students' mental leadership resilience. The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design and data analysis based on the Miles and Huberman model. The findings reveal that economic inequality has a multidimensional impact, hindering not only economic and social access but also affecting the mental health and educational quality of madrasah students. Despite living in fertile, resource-rich areas, many farmers still live in structural poverty, affecting their younger generations. Madrasah responds to this situation by developing mental resilience-based learning that integrates the values of Sufism, mindfulness, positive psychology, and SEL. However, these efforts are limited by the lack of professionals, inadequate infrastructure, and negative stigma from the community towards mental health issues. The implications of this study provide a basis for developing more holistic and context-specific educational policies and psychosocial interventions, particularly in disadvantaged areas. Additionally, this study offers key recommendations for collaboration among the government, educational institutions, and the community to build support systems that enhance students' emotional and mental resilience, breaking the cycle of poverty and inequality sustainably.

INTRODUCTION

The unequal distribution of wealth worldwide has created profound social disparities, with a small segment of the population controlling the majority of economic resources (Feng et al., 2023; Qin et al., 2024). This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in developing countries like Indonesia, the Philippines, and India, where a small, wealthy segment controls the majority of national

wealth. In contrast, the majority live in poverty and marginalization. This inequality significantly impacts social mobility and quality of life, making it difficult for disadvantaged groups to access education, health care, and other basic services (Alam et al., 2023). Education, especially that provided by religious institutions such as Madrasahs, plays a strategic role in addressing this inequality. Madrasahs are not only places for imparting religious knowledge but also play a crucial role in developing students' mental resilience and leadership skills (Shodiq, 2024), which can help them overcome the challenges of living in difficult economic conditions. In this context, a holistic educational approach that integrates Sufi values and emotional learning is crucial for equipping students to develop resilience and leadership skills despite the limitations they face.

The imbalance of wealth distribution leads to severe socio-economic disparities, disproportionately affecting the poor, including farmers, laborers, fishermen, and marginalized groups (Zhang & Zhao, 2024). These individuals bear the brunt of economic inequality, often struggling with inadequate access to education, healthcare, and basic resources. This inequality creates a vicious cycle of poverty, limiting opportunities for upward mobility and social development (Schutter et al., 2023; Tohari, 2025). In the face of these challenges, social institutions, including educational systems, play a pivotal role in offering solutions. Madrasahs, as integral parts of Islamic education, have a strategic opportunity to bridge this gap. However, without proper integration of mental and emotional resilience in their curriculum, these institutions risk failing to address the deeper, psychosocial implications of poverty, which further compound the struggle for marginalized communities. This highlights the need for research into how madrasahs can effectively respond to these inequalities.

In rural, mountainous areas, where poverty is widespread, Madrasahs are often seen as the last hope for empowering disadvantaged communities (Hasan, 2025). Despite economic challenges, these schools aim to foster students' emotional and mental resilience (Khoiroh et al., 2025; Lubis & Salabi, 2025). This approach is critical for students living in areas affected by structural poverty, where access to mental health support and resources is limited. While Madrasahs provide spiritual and religious education, they often struggle to adapt their practices to address the complex needs of students facing socio-economic hardship. The integration of values such as patience, piety, and submission to God, rooted in Islamic teachings, plays a crucial role in fostering students' emotional stability and hope. However, the current curriculum and methods are not always sufficient to break the cycle of poverty or address the long-term psychological effects of inequality. Therefore, more research is needed to explore how Madrasahs can evolve their practices better to support mental resilience in the face of economic disparity.

Previous studies have explored various aspects of economic inequality and its impact on education, particularly in developing countries. Research has shown that poverty exacerbates the challenges faced by students, not only in access to material resources but also in emotional and psychological well-being (Lewin et al., 2023; Harms & Garrett-Ruffin, 2023). Some studies have focused on the role of

religious education in fostering resilience among marginalized groups (Maulidah et al., 2022; Alim & Munib, 2021). Madrasahs, as key institutions in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia, have been seen as playing a role in addressing the socio-emotional needs of students. However, the gap lies in these institutions' ability to fully integrate modern educational practices that support mental health alongside spiritual development. Existing research has yet to fully examine how Madrasahs can respond holistically and progressively to structural poverty challenges, incorporating both spiritual and mental resilience.

Despite the progress in exploring the role of Madrasahs, there remains a gap in understanding how these institutions can better respond to the challenges of socio-economic inequality through integrated approaches. Research on Islamic education often focuses on religious teachings without considering the full scope of psychological and emotional support that students from disadvantaged backgrounds require (Yusuf, 2023). Additionally, there is limited research on how the principles of Positive Psychology and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) can be incorporated into Madrasah curricula to enhance students' mental resilience. While studies have begun to explore the roles of mindfulness and emotional intelligence in education, they rarely examine the unique context of Madrasahs in areas with high poverty levels. This gap presents a significant research opportunity that explores how Madrasahs can develop more inclusive, holistic, and contextually relevant educational practices to address the challenges of socio-economic inequality.

This study seeks to address the gap in existing research by analyzing how Madrasahs can contribute to overcoming the implications of economic inequality through the integration of emotional and mental resilience training. Specifically, it aims to investigate how Madrasahs can support students from disadvantaged communities, particularly in mountainous areas, in coping with the psychological impacts of poverty and inequality. By incorporating the principles of Sufism, mindfulness, Positive Psychology, and SEL, this research aims to propose a more holistic and progressive approach to Islamic education that addresses both spiritual and mental well-being. The study will contribute to the development of educational management practices that are more inclusive, equitable, and tailored to the needs of students living in poverty. This research is crucial for creating sustainable solutions to break the cycle of poverty and inequality through education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative case study design to understand how Madrasah Education Management contributes to providing peace of mind in response to economic inequality experienced by children from low-income families in Indonesia's mountainous areas. The qualitative approach was chosen for its ability to explore the meaning, experience, and deep perceptions of the research subject. At the same time, the case study design allows for intensive, contextual exploration of the phenomenon under study. The main subjects in this study are Madrasah students aged 12–16 years, parents of students aged 34–60 years, and

Madrasah teachers who have experience living in mountainous areas. Purposive sampling techniques are used to ensure that each participant has a background and hands-on experience that is relevant to the research objectives. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and participatory observations. The interview aims to explore in depth the participants' experiences and perspectives on the role of Madrasah education in fostering inner peace despite difficult economic conditions (Xu et al., 2025).

Interviews lasted 75 minutes for students, 60 minutes for parents, and 90 minutes for teachers, allowing for more detailed and in-depth information gathering. The collected data were then analyzed thematically using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis tool that helps identify patterns, themes, and relationships in the participants' narratives. The main focus of the analysis is on how Madrasah education management contributes to creating a peaceful life for students and their families amid economic inequality. In addition, observations were made over two months on daily learning activities and social interactions, which provided important context for understanding the dynamics in the field. Involving a total of 15 participants (5 students, 5 parents, and 5 teachers) from Bawang District, Batang Regency, Central Java, this study seeks to provide a holistic picture of the role of religious education institutions in responding to complex social and psychological challenges in disadvantaged areas (Cendikia et al., 2023).

Table 1. Informant Profiles

Name	Type of Informant	Task Keeping	City	Age (Years)	Informant Rating
S1	Student	MTs Sunan Kalijaga	Batang	14	Key Informants
S2	Student	MTs Sunan Kalijaga	Batang	14	Key Informants
S3	Student	MTs Sunan Kalijaga	Batang	15	Key Informants
S4	Student	MTs Hasyim Asy'ari	Batang	15	Key Informants
S5	Student	MTs Hasyim Asy'ari	Batang	13	Key Informants
G1	Teacher	MTs Sunan Kalijaga	Batang	24	Supporting Informants
G2	Teacher	MTs Sunan Kalijaga	Batang	34	Supporting Informants
G3	Teacher	MTs Sunan Kalijaga	Batang	45	Supporting Informants
G4	Teacher	MTs Hasyim Asy'ari	Batang	51	Supporting Informants
G5	Teacher	MTs Hasyim Asy'ari	Batang	41	Supporting Informants
W1	Parents of students	MTs Sunan Kalijaga	Batang	34	Key Informants
W2	Parents of students	MTs Sunan Kalijaga	Batang	42	Key Informants

W3	Parents of MTs students	Sunan Kalijaga	Batang	36	Key Informants
W4	Parents of MTs students	Hasyim Asy'ari	Batang	32	Key Informants
W5	Parents of MTs students	Hasyim Asy'ari	Batang	60	Key Informants

In this study, the validity and credibility of the data are crucial to ensuring the validity of the findings. One of the techniques applied by the researchers is triangulation, which involves comparing data from various sources, such as in-depth interviews and direct observations. This technique allows researchers to extract richer, more accurate information by systematically analyzing interview and observation results in NVivo software, which helps organize data, facilitates cross-checking, and identifies important patterns (Birt et al., 2016; Lloyd et al., 2024). The process of ensuring data accuracy also involves member checking, in which participants review interview transcripts to confirm that the meaning conveyed aligns with their experiences. This approach helps reduce bias and adds a layer of legitimacy to the research (Motulsky, 2021). Furthermore, discussions with colleagues and experts in transpersonal psychology help researchers enrich their interpretations of results with a broader perspective (Haryanto & Muslih, 2024). Thus, the triangulation method and the use of NVivo not only increase the credibility of the research but also strengthen the theoretical and practical context of the results, which is highly relevant to the development of peace-based education in madrasah environments, especially in disadvantaged areas (Agrawal et al., 2022).

In this study, data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model, which effectively simplifies and gives meaning to qualitative data from in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation in madrasas in Indonesia's mountainous regions. The analysis process comprises three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and verification. At the data reduction stage, information obtained from various sources, including teachers, students, madrasah heads, and community leaders, is grouped into main themes, such as education management and madrasah strategies to overcome economic inequality (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This aligns with the thematic analysis approach, which helps identify patterns and relationships among variables within the themes identified (Sari et al., 2023). During the data presentation stage, the data are organized into a matrix and a thematic narrative, making it easier for researchers to understand the interactions and relationships among the analyzed factors. This discovery underscores the role of madrassas, which are not only formal educational institutions but also centers of economic and spiritual empowerment for underprivileged communities. Meanwhile, during the verification stage, the validity of the findings is assessed through data triangulation and member checks, which enhance the reliability and validity of the research results (Iqbal et al., 2023). The analysis concludes that participatory management, scholarship programs, and the integration of religious values in madrassa education are highly effective in reducing the psychological and social

impacts of economic inequality and providing inner peace for children from underprivileged families.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result
The form of economic inequality of the poor in mountainous areas has implications for the lives of madrasah children

The findings of this study reveal that economic inequality in mountainous areas, especially for students' guardians, significantly impacts the lives of madrasah children. Unstable agricultural crop prices lead to uncertain family income, making it difficult to meet basic needs, including education costs. Many guardians work as farmers or laborers, earning less than $2 per day and often working 9 hours a day, from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. This uncertainty, compounded by unsuitable housing conditions and religious obligations, makes it challenging for parents to fulfill both social and educational responsibilities. As W1 mentioned, "The price of coffee is sometimes high, the next day it can fall drastically," which directly affects their ability to pay for education.

Another form of inequality stems from the availability of low-wage, unsuitable jobs. Despite long working hours, many parents earn minimal wages, making it impossible to meet basic living expenses, let alone educational costs. As W1 noted, "I can only be a farm laborer; the wage is only 23,000 Rupiah a day." This economic pressure forces children to miss school to help with family income, as W4 stated, "If it is harvest season, children have to help work so that they have money to buy rice."

Additionally, poor housing conditions exacerbate the challenges of economic inequality. Many families live in homes that are unsuitable for both living and learning, as W1 explained, "My house leaks when it rains, the floor is still dirty." The lack of basic facilities, such as electricity and proper sanitation, disrupts children's ability to concentrate on their studies, as W3 shared, "Children have difficulty learning because there are no lights and chairs." These unsuitable living conditions not only affect the children's health but also their academic performance, as families struggle to afford better housing.

Figure 1. The condition of the student's guardian's house of one of the madrasah students

The burden of contributions in madrasas poses a significant challenge for low-income families in mountainous areas. Despite subsidies, the cost of tuition, fees, and additional charges for events or construction remains high for families with uncertain incomes. As W1 expressed, "The cost of tuition fees and other fees is very heavy for us," and W2 added, "Every month there is always an additional fee." This financial pressure is exacerbated by discriminatory treatment of students who cannot pay, as shared by W3: "The teacher scolded my son for not paying the dues." Parents like W4 are forced to take extreme measures, such as selling chickens, to cover costs. Moreover, the community's religious culture adds burden, with W1 stating, "Every time there is a religious event, we have to donate, even though we do not have any." Social pressure compels families to prioritize religious obligations over basic needs, further straining their finances and hindering children's education, as noted by W5, "The child cannot buy books because the money is running out for the show." This situation illustrates how the combination of financial strain and religious expectations negatively affects both children's participation in and the quality of education in these communities.

Figure 2. Religious events that force residents to spend a lot of money to serve guests

Lack of access to social assistance is a significant factor exacerbating economic inequality in mountainous areas. As W1 stated, "Aid from the government rarely gets here," and W2 pointed out, "If there is social assistance, it is usually the neighbors who are close to the village apparatus." Discrimination in aid distribution, combined with low administrative literacy and poor infrastructure, prevents many families from accessing government support. W3 expressed, "We do not know whom to report to if we cannot get help," and W4 mentioned the difficulty of navigating bureaucratic processes, saying, "We have to walk a long way just to take care of the certificate of incapacity." These barriers prevent people experiencing poverty from receiving the assistance they need.

Inadequate teacher qualifications and a lack of parental awareness of the importance of education also impact the quality of education in madrasas. W1 shared, "The teachers are not, on average, yet S1; some are only MTs graduates," leading to unclear subject matter and disengaged students, as W2 mentioned, "The child does not understand." Harsh disciplinary approaches and teacher absenteeism further hinder learning. W5 emphasized the need for qualified teachers, saying, "I want my child to be taught by a professional teacher." In

addition, the lack of parental support, with views like W1's statement, "The important thing is that children can read the Qur'an," contributes to low educational expectations and fewer opportunities for children to escape poverty.

How does the economic inequality of parents affect the peace of life of madrasah students?

Economic inequality between parents significantly affects students' quality of life in madrasas. Differences in family financial conditions affect not only access to educational resources such as tutoring, school supplies, and extracurricular activities but also create psychological pressure on students. Some students experience feelings of inferiority and anxiety when they see their wealthier peers, which makes it difficult to focus on their studies and engage in social interactions comfortably. These feelings are exacerbated by hurtful comments that make them question their self-worth. The dominance of wealthier students in learning groups or social activities creates a dynamic of social class divisions, reinforcing a sense of injustice. Without inclusive support from the environment, the negative effects of economic inequality will continue to affect students' learning experiences.

For instance, S3, a student from MTs Sunan Kalijaga, recalled a painful experience when a peer told her, "I do not have money, I do not have to participate in competitions." This remark left her feeling unappreciated and clouded her mood. She also noticed different treatment for students from wealthier families, although it was not overt. Despite this, S3 received support from some caring teachers who helped her stay confident. However, she expressed the hope that the madrasa environment could become more inclusive and not discriminate based on economic background, believing that all students have the same potential regardless of their family's financial condition.

S2, another student from MTs Sunan Kalijaga, shared that his parents' economic condition not only affects their daily needs but also causes psychological discomfort at the madrasa. He expressed anxiety about not having enough money for activity fees, which made it difficult for him to focus during class. He also felt uncomfortable when some friends boasted about their expensive possessions, which created a tense atmosphere. Despite this, S2 made an effort not to dwell on negative feelings and maintained his inner peace. He hoped the madrasa could become a more welcoming and inclusive place for all students, regardless of their economic background, so that the learning atmosphere would be more harmonious.

S1, also a student at MTs Sunan Kalijaga, described how his parents' economic inequality affected his daily social interactions at the madrasa. He often felt nervous seeing peers with new uniforms or complete supplies and wondered why his family could not provide those things. This created a sense of injustice and hindered his concentration in class. Though he understood that each family has different circumstances, a sense of inferiority still lingered when comparing himself to wealthier students. Nevertheless, S1 tried to stay focused on his education, believing that with effort, he could achieve a better future despite his limitations.

From MTs Hasyim Asy'ari, S5 expressed frustration with the social dynamics created by economic inequality. He observed that wealthier students were more dominant in study groups and extracurricular activities, such as going on vacations or buying school supplies, which not all students could afford. This created a visible division between social classes, even though it was not formally acknowledged. S5 also felt that students from poorer families were often seen as less competent simply because of their economic background. While he understood that not everyone was to blame for this inequality, he hoped for increased awareness in madrasas about the importance of inclusivity and recognizing individual potential, regardless of economic status.

S4, another student from MTs Hasyim Asy'ari, shared how his family's economic inequality affected his perspective on the future and his motivation for higher education. He recalled saying to his teacher, "Why do we have to go to college if we also work later?" after seeing his brother work after graduating from high school. He felt that the economic reality of his family made pursuing higher education seem uncertain. He also noticed that wealthier students had greater access to tutoring, courses, and extracurricular programs that could enhance their achievements. Despite this, S4 persevered and believed that, with effort, he could prove that economic background is not a barrier to success.

The experiences of these students highlight the profound impact of parental economic inequality on their emotional, social, and academic well-being. Feelings of inferiority, mental pressure, and social stigma create significant barriers to their full participation in the educational process. However, despite facing these challenges, some students demonstrated resilience and a strong determination to overcome their limitations. As educational institutions grounded in Islamic values, madrasas have a moral responsibility to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Through character development, social awareness, and pro-poor policies, madrasas can ensure that all students feel safe, comfortable, and motivated to reach their full potential, regardless of their economic background.

Madrasah Innovation in Integrating Mental Resilience Learning Amid Economic Disparities

The findings of this study indicate that madrasas' integration of resilience-based learning has a positive effect on students' coping with stress related to economic disparities. Key approaches include Sufism, which fosters students' inner peace, and an Integrated Positive Psychology Intervention Program that incorporates life skills classes, emotion management, problem-solving, and social skills. Mindfulness is also incorporated through short meditation sessions and mindfulness journaling to improve focus and emotional regulation. Mental resilience-based group interventions, such as SEL discussions and role-playing real-life scenarios, further help students develop proactive responses to stress. Educational films and dramas on growth mindset and optimism provide students with positive perspectives and build mental strength.

Sufism is a central part of the learning approach at MTs Sunan Kalijaga and MTs Hasyim Asy'ari. G1 explained that Sufism helps students build patience and

tawakal, and G4 emphasized that practices such as morning dhikr and closing prayers foster gratitude and reflection. According to G2, understanding Sufism helps students accept their family's economic reality without feeling inferior. The approach not only strengthens spirituality but also nurtures character and empathy, shaping students' ability to face life's challenges.

The Integrated Positive Psychology Intervention Program, including life skills classes, teaches practical tools for managing stress. G2 shared, "We teach emotion management and communication skills through simulations and group discussions." G4 added, "Students learn to resolve conflicts with a cool head and find solutions together." G1 noted that these skills make students more confident and less stressed in interactions, while G5 emphasized that students learn to manage psychological stress independently.

Daily self-reflection activities help students focus on the positive aspects of their lives, fostering optimism and self-awareness. G4 described, "Students are asked to write down three good things each day," helping them focus on the positive, even in difficult situations. G3 added that this practice allows students to explore overlooked potential, while G1 noted that it encourages a positive mindset and quick recovery from anxiety.

Short meditation sessions before class help students mentally prepare for learning. G3 shared, "Meditation helps students calm down and be ready for class," and G4 observed that it helps students stabilize their emotions, especially when coming from tense home environments. G2 emphasized that simple breathing techniques are effective, while G1 noted that many students feel more comfortable and focused after these sessions.

Mindfulness journaling is a weekly routine that supports emotional regulation and self-awareness. G1 stated, "Students write their feelings honestly, helping them understand their emotions." G4 noted that the writings allow teachers to see emotional development and provide appropriate responses. G5 emphasized that journaling builds self-awareness and mental resilience, helping students cope with their emotions.

The SEL discussion group fosters emotional awareness and solidarity among students. G2 explained, "Students discuss real issues like family pressures with a collaborative approach." G3 added that it helps students realize they are not alone in facing problems. S2 shared, "I can tell my friends about my family's financial pressures and receive support," while S1 noted that these discussions improved communication and created a more harmonious classroom atmosphere.

Challenges Faced by Madrassas in Addressing the Psychological Impact of Economic Inequality in Mountainous Areas

This study highlights the structural and operational challenges madrassas in mountainous areas face in addressing the psychological and emotional impact of economic inequality on students. Structural challenges include a lack of trained professionals in psychology or counseling, inadequate teacher training in emotional support, and limited infrastructure for mental health services. G1 stated, "We are well aware that many students experience emotional distress, but

we do not have a school psychologist," and G2 added, "As subject teachers, we are not psychologists, but we are often the only place where students can discuss their problems." This lack of resources and support leads to inconsistent responses to students' emotional needs.

Limited infrastructure, especially in remote areas, further complicates the situation. G2 explained, "We want to try online counseling programs, but the network is often disconnected," and G3 added, "Even though the reference says that digital intervention can be effective, our infrastructure is not ready." Physical facilities, such as counseling rooms, are also lacking, with G5 noting, "There is no special room for counseling, let alone a meditation or mindfulness room." These barriers prevent the effective implementation of mental health programs, leaving teachers with limited tools to support students' emotional well-being.

Geographical challenges also hinder the implementation of psychological support programs. G2 explained, "During the rainy season, the roads become slippery and sometimes buried by landslides, so visits to homes are impossible." The difficulty in accessing students' homes prevents teachers from understanding the full context of students' lives. G3 highlighted, "Many elderly people live in areas where even two-wheeled vehicles are difficult to pass," making home visits and coordination with external professionals difficult. These challenges limit the ability to provide targeted interventions and support.

The stigma around mental health further exacerbates the issue. G2 stated, "There is a stigma that mental problems are taboo or just spiritual matters, not psychological," and G3 added, "Parents trust shamans more than counselors." This cultural barrier makes it difficult for teachers to encourage families to seek professional help for their children's emotional issues. G5 emphasized, "We have talked to them about the importance of mental health, but the response has been slow." This lack of parental cooperation limits the effectiveness of any interventions implemented at the madrasah level.

In terms of intervention programs, G2 noted, "Even though studies say that programs like CBT or mindfulness can help students, we have not been taught that method." There is a clear gap in the training and resources necessary to implement effective mental health programs. G3 added, "Teachers need practical training, not just theory." This absence of integrated psychological intervention programs at the madrasah level results in inconsistent and sometimes ineffective approaches to addressing students' mental health needs. G5 pointed out, "We need integrated guidance, not just individual teacher initiatives."

Finally, a lack of funding is a significant barrier. G3 explained, "We have applied for cooperation with psychological institutions, but the budget is not available," and G2 added, "Existing funds are prioritized for basic physical or operational development." Without proper funding, mental health programs remain underdeveloped and unsustainable. G4 suggested, "The government needs to allocate special funds for mental health programs in madrasas." Teachers agree that systemic changes, including professional support, ongoing training, and adequate funding, are essential to ensuring students' mental well-being in

mountainous areas. As G5 emphasized, "We must not remain silent. These children need real support."

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that, despite living in fertile areas, farming communities in Indonesia's mountainous regions remain trapped in poverty due to economic inequality. This inequality manifests as income instability, low wages, and substandard housing conditions. These economic challenges extend to students in madrasas, leading to psychological pressures such as low self-esteem, anxiety, and emotional disturbances. In response, madrasas have introduced innovative approaches that integrate mental resilience learning, including Sufism, Positive Psychology, mindfulness, and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs. However, madrasas face structural challenges such as a lack of trained professionals, limited infrastructure, and social stigma regarding mental health. Operational difficulties, including difficult geographical access and limited funding, further hinder the implementation of psychosocial programs, requiring comprehensive support from the government and educational institutions for sustainable development.

From a theoretical perspective, the study applies functionalist structural theory and Karl Marx's conflict theory, which links economic inequality to social stratification and control over production resources. The findings suggest that despite fertile land and abundant resources, external actors, such as middlemen and large businesses, control key production factors, trapping farmers in unstable wage labor (Zainuddin et al., 2020; Muslim et al., 2024). This exploitation within a capitalist system results in ongoing poverty, which Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction helps explain by showing how economic and cultural capital erode students' confidence, creating a sense of inferiority through social comparisons (Haekal, 2021; Budhijana, 2020). This not only reinforces structural poverty but also contributes to long-term psychological inequalities that affect individuals and society as a whole (Herdiana, 2022; Kolibu et al., 2019).

The madrasah's response to these challenges can be understood through Anthony Giddens' agency theory, which suggests that while social structures such as poverty and stigma strongly influence individuals, institutions like madrasas can act as agents of change. Madrassas' integration of mental resilience-based learning demonstrates their proactive role in supporting students' mental health within structural limitations (Chen-Levi et al., 2022). However, Giddens also emphasizes that structural forces constrain agency, and madrassas face challenges such as a shortage of qualified teachers, infrastructure, and funding. To address this, the study advocates for a two-level transformation strategy: local capacity building and structural interventions, such as policy support and adequate funding, to ensure that psychosocial programs are sustainable and inclusive (Priestley et al., 2012).

This study provides a significant contribution by uncovering the complexity of the relationship between economic inequality and its psychological impact on madrasah students, offering new insights into how madrasas innovate in response

to these challenges. Unlike previous research, which often viewed madrasas as rigid and unresponsive, this study shows that madrasas integrate social, psychological, and religious dimensions in their approach to addressing students' emotional needs (Martínez & Gómez, 2024). This perspective challenges the notion that religious institutions ignore economic issues, positioning madrasas as active agents of change. It also offers a new reference for developing inclusive education policies responsive to the specific needs of disadvantaged areas, in contrast to previous studies that emphasized sociological or macroeconomic factors.

Finally, the findings suggest that madrasas are not only traditional religious institutions but also agents of social transformation, integrating values of Sufism, Positive Psychology, mindfulness, and SEL to promote mental well-being. This multidimensional approach enriches the discourse on inclusive education by addressing students' psychological needs in specific socio-economic contexts (Hairit, 2024; Rahmi & Muqowim, 2022). The research also proposes practical guidelines for integrating psychosocial interventions into madrasah curricula to bridge gaps among social, psychological, and religious aspects (Alvaro, 2022). With adequate training and local adaptation, these interventions can be replicated in other regions, contributing to the development of inclusive education policies

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that economic inequality has a profound multidimensional impact, not only on economic and social aspects but also on mental health and the quality of education, especially for madrasah students in Indonesia's mountainous regions. Despite living in an area with abundant natural resources, farming communities remain trapped in structural poverty that affects the younger generation psychologically. These findings provide important implications for education, mental health, and poverty alleviation policies. A holistic intervention involving the government, educational institutions, and community participation is crucial to building students' mental and emotional resilience. The innovation in learning based on mental resilience developed by madrasas is a positive step. However, without adequate infrastructure, experts, and funding, it will be difficult to realize these efforts effectively. This study recommends the need for inter-institutional collaboration, improved access to transportation and communication, and a change in society's paradigm towards mental health issues as a foundation in overcoming the psychosocial impact of economic inequality. Without comprehensive action, the potential of the young generation in mountainous areas will continue to be hampered, thus prolonging the chain of poverty and inequality.

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