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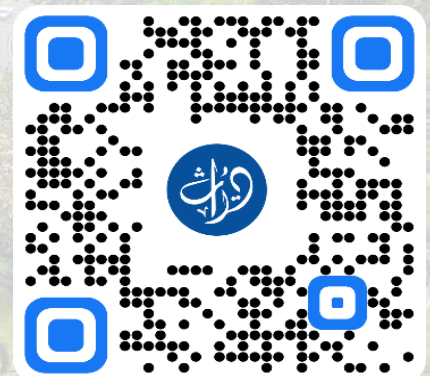
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The Role of Literacy to Reduce Poverty in Islamic Education

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Abstract

Literacy skills pave the way to gaining knowledge, and it is a vital component of every nation's development. Education is a powerful tool for eliminating poverty, increasing shared wealth, and forming a community that can deal with difficult times. The importance of education in Islam is a key part of achieving the Islamic vision of development and a prosperous way of life, which is called socio-economic development. This research attempts to investigate that Islamic education has played an important role in enhancing literacy, and it lays the foundation for reducing poverty and encouraging economic progress. The method adopted in this study was a qualitative approach starting with document analysis of the connection between literacy and poverty and the role of Islamic education in reducing poverty. The findings of this study indicate that, from the Islamic point of view, literacy is part of a broader conversation on the strategies, programs, and policies that inform a comprehensive and effective poverty reduction strategy. From the beginning of Islam, it has offered believers a chance for equality and respect regardless of whether they are poor, slaves, or without position or prestige in society. Islam holds knowledge, education, literacy, and intellectual pursuits in high regard.

Keywords: Literacy and poverty, reducing poverty, Literacy in reducing poverty, Islamic education in reducing poverty, Reducing poverty in Islam



INTRODUCTION

Literacy is a fundamental human right. Literacy, education, and development are all intricately linked. Acquiring literacy is the first step in the educational process. And progress is only possible through the educational process. To reduce poverty, backwardness, and child labor, literacy is required. It is more important for illiterate parents to ensure their children do not suffer the same fate. Therefore, literacy is seen as a crucial instrument for achieving more balanced development and increased prosperity. According to Lind, literacy is important for people of all ages. Adults who need and want to participate in structured fundamental learning and education are generally people who have missed part or all of their official education, much like out-of-school adolescents. One of the most common reasons for this is poverty, which means they must make a living/provide a life for themselves and their families (Lind, Agneta, 2008).

Literacy makes people aware and empowers them to become self-reliant. Education is the most powerful tool for eradicating poverty in any nation. Literacy is a prerequisite for education and it has been much emphasized in Islam, and it is a religion that is concerned with literacy. The first revelation commands 'read', which implies 'learning' 'exploring' and 'seeking enlightenment' (Tareque Bin Atique, 2012: 192-200). Allah says: "Read! In the Name of your Lord who has created (all that exists) (Sūrah Al-'Alaq 96:1). Therefore, to explore the role of education in reducing poverty from an Islamic perspective, this article describes the nature of poverty, the connection between literacy and poverty, and the role of Islamic education in reducing poverty.

1. The Nature Of Poverty

Poverty refers to the inadequacy of subordinate resources or income to meet the basic necessities of life (Merriam Webster, 2017). Poverty can have social, economic, and political components. The term "extreme poverty" refers to the complete absence of economic or any other means necessary to meet basic personal needs such as food, education, clothing, and shelter (I Omelaniuk, 2013). Poverty is a special level of deprivation of human beings. The people in society who are deprived of the minimum food, clothing, education, medical treatment, etc., that is, those who are forced to live a dehumanized life despite being human, are called poor.

Generally, poverty is defined as a stage or condition of the economy where individuals or families are somehow unable to meet their basic needs. In addition to the basic necessities of daily life, they may not be able to meet their needs or make a living. There are two types of poverty: relative poverty and absolute poverty. Relative poverty is defined as the economic backwardness of a society. Relative poverty is the difference in the financial capacity to acquire the means of living. According to Lok-Dessallien and Renata (1999; 21), relative poverty contrasts the poorest and richest sectors of a population, which is commonly quantified in income quintiles or deciles.

Absolute poverty refers to a socio-economic condition where people cannot meet basic needs properly. Extremely poor people lack the resources, capacity, and independence to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education, and medical care. The next level of extreme poverty is begging. As Singer (1993) states, absolute poverty is a state of life that is so full of hunger, illiteracy, sickness, filthy living conditions, high infant mortality, and short life expectancy that it doesn't make sense to think about human dignity in any real way. Poverty is a pervasive and complex social problem that reflects the negative state of the economy and is not free from its grip on any aspect of human person, family, or social life.

From the Islamic education, the elimination of poverty is part of the *shari'ah*, which encompasses all aspects of life, including economic, political, and social well-being. Poverty is seen as both a social and an ideological evil in Islam (Sadeq, Abul Hasan M.,1997). It is a social

evil because it lowers the societal prestige of Allah's vicegerents, causes many social difficulties, and places impoverished countries at a disadvantage in the human race's global civilization. It is also an ideological evil since it undermines one's ability to fulfill one's socio-religious commitments to humanity and Islam. It may lead to *kufir* by pushing one to engage in behaviors that only a *kafir* would engage in. It is so dreadful that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ begged Allah's protection. He said: "O Allah, I seek refuge in Thee from poverty", lack and abasement, and I seek refuge in Thee lest I cause or suffer wrong" (Sunan Abi Dawud, 1544). The following verses are made clear the Islamic attitude towards poverty, Allah states: "Have you seen the one who denies the 'final' Judgment? That is the one who repulses the orphan, and does not encourage the feeding of the poor" (Sūrah Al-Ma'un, 107:1-3).

According to *tafsīr Mazḥari* (Vol. 10, 602), the Almighty Allah here refers to the person who denies religion and describes his bad traits as that he treats the destitute harshly, chases away the needy, and encourages others to do the same. The verse shows that Islam does not favour poverty, and offers many ways to help poor people, as Allah says: "and in their wealth, there was a right for one who asks and for one who is deprived" (Sūrah Adh-Dhariyat, 51:19). Ibn Kathīr (Vol. 7, 521) says: the verse mentioned people's quality of spending on charity and acts of compassion and kindness.

Islamic education inculcates moral values that include a broad range of virtues such as honesty, integrity, tolerance, truthfulness, self-discipline, humility, patience, industry and others (Yakubu, Aminu, and Dahiru Usman, 2019). Thus, successful education should be based on morality. If this type of education is imparted to the people, they can play a vital role in building a society rich in moral and spiritual values, a place of peace and harmony, and free of chronic poverty.

2. Literacy And Poverty

Literacy is a strong basis for reducing poverty. It helps protect people's rights, makes sure basic education is available to everyone, builds peace, solves conflicts, and makes sure everyone has enough food. It also helps improve the quality of life in a society (Afghanistan National Literacy Action Plan, 2012-2015). Literacy helps people meet their "basic learning needs" (Montoya, Silvia, 2018: 17-18), which include both essential learning tools and basic learning content that all people need to survive, develop their full potential, live and work in dignity, fully participate in the development, improve their quality of life, make informed decisions, and keep learning. Poverty is more than just a lack of financial means. According to Amartya Sen, poverty is defined as the inability to operate successfully in society (Van der Berg, Servaas, 2008: 1-28). Therefore, a lack of literacy might be considered a type of poverty. And literacy skills can help people get out of poverty by allowing them to function successfully in society.

Poverty is seen as the primary hindrance to the growth and development of not just people, but also communities and society as a whole. To develop a flourishing society free of hunger and poverty, there is no other option except to educate all of its citizens. People become more conscious as a result of literacy and education. Knowledge opens their eyes and transforms them into respectable citizens. Education is the most important instrument in the process of nation-building. Literacy is a requirement for participation in educational activities. According to Kapur, (2019) people who get an education can improve their skills and abilities so that they can get more power and meet their job needs in a better way.

Investment in education and the human capital building has been essential for economic growth and poverty alleviation. There are two distinct ways to understand the relationship between education and poverty. Firstly, investing in education improves the skills and production of disadvantaged households. It raises wages as well as the general well-being of the population. Secondly, poverty may be a significant impediment to educational progress. This can be

interpreted in three different ways. The first comes from the resource side, where poverty might make it difficult to acquire learning and other pedagogical tools (Awan, S., Malik, N., & Sarwar, H., 2008). The second point of view is that poverty can create social pressures that mutilate the mindsets of poor students. Finally, Bramley and Karley (2005) demonstrated that poverty degrades teaching standards when poverty takes over an institution.

The direction of causation between poverty and education links has been demonstrated to run both ways. First, poverty is a factor that prevents people from obtaining an education. On the other hand, those with a higher level of education are thought to be less vulnerable to poverty. According to Appleton (1997), each year of basic schooling results in a 2.5 percent reduction in the chance of poverty, while lower secondary learning has approximately twice the effect. Overall, the impact of education on the probability of poverty is very high.

If the link between poverty and illiteracy is not broken, the next generation will remain poor and uneducated. Parents who are uneducated or poor have less income and education, making it impossible for them to provide adequate support for their children. Because the parents are illiterate and poor, the child is also illiterate and poor. It is seen that the children of the poor are deprived of education in most cases. Their income is also low, so they remain poor. Again, the next generation of these poor boys or girls will also remain poor. In this sense, illiteracy and poverty are complementary, and it traps the illusion and poverty generation after generation. According to Barnard (2011: 1-9), parental involvement in teaching young children to read is important because the ability to read is based on skill development rather than innate ability.

Finally, it can be said that if literacy and life skills education are well-balanced, people can learn new knowledge and skills that would help them make better decisions about their life, as well as how to keep their generation literate.

3. Islamic Education In Reducing Poverty

Education is widely recognized as a critical instrument for development on a global scale. Economic growth is not the only thing that drives development; it also has social, cultural, and political aspects. According to the World Bank (2008), education that is broad-based and high-quality is one of the best ways to fight poverty and inequality. Individuals may be able to get out of poverty by getting more education and getting a better job, and the effects of this will be passed down through the generations. Education is vital, not just because it may lead to a good career. In Islam, there are five essentials (*ḍarūriyyāt*) in life: faith, life, intellect, posterity, and wealth. According to *Imām Ghazālī*: "the *sharī'ah*'s objective is to ensure the well-being of all humanity, which includes protecting their faith (*dīn*), human self (*nafsi*), intellect (*'aql*), posterity (*nasl*), and wealth (*māl*)." Whatever assures the protection of these five is desirable and serves the public interest (Chapra M. Umar, 2016).

According to *Al-Ghazālī* (2005), intellect is the foundation of knowledge. Seeking knowledge is obligatory in Islam, and it is a basic need in human life. Islam's emphasis on the intellect is key to realizing the Islamic vision of development (Chapra, M. Umer, 2008: 15). It is an established fact that, according to Muslim scholars, the preservation of wealth is one of the essential and universal principles of *sharī'ah*, which is in the necessary category (Dusuki, Ayraf Wajdi, and Said Bouheraoua, 2011: 316-336). Islamic economic theory aspires to reduce poverty by meeting basic human needs. Therefore, promoting education is critical to achieving socioeconomic development and reducing poverty. Islam promotes a prosperous life system or socio-economic development through education.

Islam recommends investing in students in order to achieve financial success. Anas Ibn Malik said: "there were two brothers during the time of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. One of them

used to come to the prophet ﷺ, and the other had some business. The businessman among them complained to the Prophet ﷺ about his brother, so he said: “Perhaps you are provided for because of him” (Jami` at-Tirmidhi: 2345). That is to say that he stayed with the Prophet ﷺ in order to learn from him, and this hadith is the recommendation to financially help people who are students of Islamic teaching (Riyad-us-Salihin, Vol. 1, 163). The emphasis on acquiring knowledge and preserving wealth describes how Islam encourages people to engage in labor and work.

In Islam, education entails more than just the acquisition of knowledge. It guides people to discover their potentials with the knowledge they have gained. The Qur’an promotes the development of talents and vocations. The Qur’an and Sunnah encourage Muslims to work to reduce poverty no matter what type of work it is. Allah says in the Holy Qur’an: “Then when the Salah is complete, you may disperse through the land, and seek the bounty of Allah, and remember Allah much, that you may be successful” (Sūrah Al-Jumu'ah, 62:10).

Ibn Kathīr (Vol. 8, 554) said in the explanation of this *āyat* that after finishing the prayer, Allah asks people to spread throughout the earth for seeking his bounty. And *Ibn Kathīr* also mentioned that people should remember Allah even in busy times, and should not be distracted from what they will gain in the Hereafter. So, every Muslim should spread throughout the earth for seeking sustenance. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: If one of you were to make a rope and bring a bundle of firewood on his back and sell it, so that Allah may protect him from humiliation, that would be better for him than begging from people who may give him something or refuse to give him anything (Riyad as-Salihin, 539). Islam teaches that any permissible occupation or trading is a primary means of obtaining money in order to eradicate poverty. One may work in agriculture, mining, engineering, medicine, transportation, and business, among other fields (Yakubu, Aminu, and Dahiru Usman, 2019).

The purpose of education in Islam is to achieve human development. After Adam, the first man was created, Allah gave him knowledge about various things; and in the light of this knowledge, Allah established the superiority of man over the angels. According to the Qur’an: “He taught Adam the names of all things” (Sūrah Al-Baqarah, 2:31) and other verses states: “He is the One Who has placed you as successors on earth and elevated some of you in rank over others” (Sūrah Al-An'am, 6:165). Islamic education focuses on developing people who not only worship Allah but also live in line with His teachings (Yakubu, Aminu, and Dahiru Usman, 2019). And in the implementation of this human development, the importance of earning a living, gaining self-reliance, fulfilling one's duties, acquiring qualifications, and increasing one's skills through acquiring knowledge is immense. Finally, Islamic education can help fight poverty by providing people with more opportunities.

CONCLUSION

This study found a connection between literacy and poverty. Literacy is necessary for learning. There is no way to acquire more knowledge if you don't have the literacy skills, and Islamic education enhances literacy. Literacy is the first step to getting an education, and getting an education is the best way to get out of poverty in any country. The Qur'an promotes the development of talents and vocations, and every Muslim should spread throughout the earth to seek sustenance. Islamic education focuses on developing people who not only worship Allah but also live in line with His teachings, and in the implementation of this human development, the importance of earning a living, gaining self-reliance, fulfilling one's duties, acquiring qualifications, and increasing one's skills through acquiring knowledge is immense. Seeking knowledge is obligatory in Islam, and it is a basic need in human life. Islamic economic theory aspires to reduce poverty by meeting basic human needs. Therefore, promoting Islamic education is critical to achieving socio-economic development and reducing poverty.

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