



Islamic Spiritual Education and Increasing Elderly Happiness

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ABSTRACT

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The phenomenon of the increasing elderly population in Indonesia raises various challenges, one of which is how to ensure their emotional well-being and happiness. Siti Khadijah Nursing Home in Kesambi, Cirebon City, seeks to provide solutions through an Islamic spiritual education program. This study aims to explore the concept, implementation, challenges, responses, and impacts of Islamic spiritual education on increasing the happiness of the residents of the nursing home. The method used is descriptive qualitative, with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document studies. Data analysis was conducted using triangulation techniques of sources, methods, and theories to ensure the validity of the findings. The results showed that the Islamic spiritual education program involving congregational prayer, reading the Qur'an, praying together, and spiritual counseling significantly increased the happiness of the elderly. The main challenges in implementing the program were limited human resources, facilities, and support from the residents' families. The residents' responses to the program were very positive, with active participation in every activity carried out. In conclusion, Islamic spiritual education has proven effective in increasing the happiness of the elderly, but improvements are still needed in terms of resource management and family involvement. Recommendations are given to strengthen external support and optimize spiritual-based programs to achieve sustainable elderly welfare.

KEYWORDS:

Islamic Spiritual
Education, Elderly
Happiness, Nursing
Home

1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic spiritual education is an important approach in building emotional well-being, especially among the elderly. In various elderly care institutions, especially in Islamic-based nursing homes, spiritual education is often implemented as an effort to provide inner peace, improve quality of life, and bring happiness in old age. Elderly people who tend to experience physical and mental decline are also faced with social challenges, such as isolation, loneliness, and alienation from family. In this context, Islamic spiritual education plays an important role as a means to strengthen the spiritual relationship of the elderly with God, so that it can provide peace and deep meaning in life (Kadir, 2019; Rahmawati, 2021; Rosmalina et al., 2023; Rochmat et al., 2024).

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Previous studies have shown that Islamic spiritual education has a strong correlation with improving the mental and emotional well-being of the elderly. According to Azizah (2021), elderly people who are actively involved in religious activities tend to feel happier, calmer, and more optimistic in living their lives. This is due to the strengthening of religious values that connect them with the concept of life after death (*akhirat*), which is believed to provide hope for eternal happiness. In the context of Islamic nursing homes, this approach is not only about formal teaching of Islamic teachings, but also the application of spiritual values in daily life, such as praying together, reading the Qur'an, and congregational worship activities (Syamsul, 2020).

This phenomenon is increasingly relevant in Indonesia, where Islamic-based nursing homes continue to grow along with the increasing elderly population. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (2021), Indonesia is experiencing a significant increase in the number of elderly people, with an estimated 10% of the total population in 2030 being elderly. Many of those living in nursing homes face psychological challenges, such as depression, anxiety, and loss of meaning in life due to separation from family. Therefore, nursing homes have a responsibility to provide a holistic approach

that not only pays attention to the physical needs of the elderly, but also their spiritual needs (Hakim, 2022).

Panti Wredha Siti Khadijah Kesambi Kota Cirebon is one of the institutions that consistently implements Islamic spiritual education programs for its elderly residents. This program aims to improve the happiness and quality of life of the elderly through an approach that emphasizes the importance of a spiritual relationship with God. In line with Islamic principles, this program is designed so that the elderly can get closer to Allah SWT at the end of their lives. The activities carried out include joint prayers, congregational prayers, reading the Qur'an, and spiritual guidance provided by Ustadz and the management of the nursing home (Abdullah, 2020). However, although Islamic spiritual education has been proven to have a positive impact on the elderly, its implementation is not always without challenges. Several studies have noted obstacles in terms of limited trained human resources, lack of supporting facilities, and cultural challenges that arise from differences in the social backgrounds of the elderly (Sari, 2021). In addition, support from the families of residents is often a challenge in itself, considering that most residents of nursing homes come from busy families or do not have an emotional closeness to the elderly (Wahyuni, 2022). This limited support can hinder the effectiveness of spiritual education programs that aim to provide happiness and spiritual well-being for the elderly. With this background, this study aims to examine in depth how the concept, implementation, challenges, and impacts of Islamic spiritual education are applied at Panti Wredha Siti Khadijah Kesambi, Cirebon City. The main focus of the study is on increasing the happiness of elderly residents, as well as how the program affects their spiritual well-being. This study is expected to provide new insights regarding the management of Islamic-based nursing homes and the importance of spiritual education in improving the quality of life of the elderly in Indonesia.

II. THEORETICAL BASIS

A. Islamic Spiritual Education: Concept and Implementation

Islamic spiritual education is a process that aims to shape, direct, and strengthen human relationships with Allah SWT through the practice of Islamic teachings (Rizqi et al., 2022). This education emphasizes the inner aspects of everyday life with the aim of increasing human closeness to God, deepening religious understanding, and improving one's morals and character. According to Ghazali (2020), spiritual education in Islam is an effort to prepare humans to be able to live their worldly lives as well as possible and achieve eternal happiness in the afterlife. Values such as honesty, patience, sincerity, and surrender to God's destiny are core parts of Islamic spiritual education (Siddiq, 2021).

In the context of nursing homes, Islamic spiritual education has an important role because it can provide a sense of calm and peace for the elderly who often experience uncertainty

and anxiety related to life in old age. The implementation of Islamic spiritual education in nursing homes often involves routine religious activities such as congregational prayer, joint prayer, Islamic studies, and reading the Qur'an. This is in accordance with the opinion of Zainuddin (2019) who stated that collective worship can strengthen a sense of togetherness and provide emotional support for individuals who feel isolated.

In addition to worship activities, Islamic spiritual education also includes fostering Islamic morals and behavior in daily interactions. In nursing homes, the elderly are taught to continue to carry out commendable behavior such as respecting fellow residents, being patient, and always being grateful in the face of various physical and mental conditions that worsen. According to Hasan (2021), moral education is one of the main pillars in Islamic spiritual education, which aims to shape human character to remain strong and adhere to religious teachings in every phase of life, including in old age.

The concept of Islamic spiritual education also includes efforts to strengthen faith through reflection and self-introspection. Elderly people in nursing homes are often given spiritual guidance by managers or Ustadz who are tasked with helping them understand the meaning of life and the importance of preparing for life after death. As explained by Rahmat (2020), deep spiritual reflection can lead individuals to a broader understanding of life, death, and destiny that has been determined by Allah SWT, thus providing inner peace.

The importance of Islamic spiritual education in the lives of the elderly is also recognized in various studies that examine the influence of religion on psychological well-being. According to Aziz (2022), elderly people who have a strong attachment to religion tend to be better able to overcome depression, stress, and anxiety than those who are not active in spiritual activities. Therefore, nursing homes that implement Islamic spiritual education can provide significant support for the emotional and mental well-being of their residents.

In its implementation, Islamic spiritual education in nursing homes often faces various challenges, such as limited human resources who are competent in providing spiritual guidance and adequate facilities to support religious activities. These challenges need to be overcome so that spiritual education programs can run sustainably and effectively. Research conducted by Sari (2021) emphasizes the importance of training and development for nursing home staff so that they are able to provide better and more sustainable spiritual guidance to residents.

B. Elderly Happiness in Nursing Homes: Abraham H. Maslow's Basic Needs Theory Perspective

The happiness of the elderly in nursing homes is a very important aspect, considering the physical and mental conditions that generally decline in old age. To understand

the factors that influence the happiness of the elderly, Abraham H. Maslow's basic needs theory is often used as a conceptual framework. According to Maslow (1943), a person's happiness or well-being depends on the fulfillment of the hierarchy of basic needs, starting from physiological needs, security, love and belonging, self-esteem, to self-actualization. For the elderly living in nursing homes, fulfilling these needs is a challenge in itself due to the limited resources and social support available (Gordon, 2020).

Physiological needs include basic human needs such as food, water, shelter, and health. In nursing homes, these needs are the main priority that must be met to maintain the physical condition of the elderly. According to research by Handayani (2021), the elderly living in nursing homes tend to have better access to physiological needs compared to the elderly living alone. However, fulfilling these needs alone is not enough to guarantee their happiness.

The need for security is also very important for the elderly, especially since they are in a phase of life where physical and mental health begins to decline. The elderly in nursing homes need a sense of security both physically and emotionally. Research by Johnson (2019) shows that the sense of security provided by nursing home managers through consistent care and a controlled environment can help the elderly feel more comfortable and protected. However, the sense of security also includes a spiritual aspect, where the elderly need assurance that they are on the right track to happiness in the afterlife, as expressed in Islamic spiritual education.

The need for love and belonging is often a major challenge for the elderly living in nursing homes. They tend to feel isolated from their families and previous social environments. According to research by Riyanto (2020), Islamic spiritual education implemented in nursing homes can help meet this need through religious activities that strengthen social bonds between residents and with management staff. Activities such as praying together, praying in congregation, and celebrating religious holidays can create a sense of togetherness and reduce loneliness in the elderly.

Furthermore, the need for self-esteem is an important aspect in creating happiness for the elderly in nursing homes. Elderly people who feel appreciated and considered important by others tend to have higher self-esteem and feel happier (Roselina & Muhammad, 2023). According to Maslow (1954), appreciation and recognition from others is one of the main factors in building self-esteem. In the context of Islamic nursing homes, appreciation for the elderly can be manifested through giving roles in religious activities, such as leading prayers or giving short sermons. A study by Wahyuni (2022) showed that elderly people who were given the opportunity to actively participate in nursing home activities tended to have better self-esteem.

Self-actualization is the peak of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where individuals feel that they have reached their full potential. In old age, self-actualization is often associated with spiritual achievement and fulfillment of life goals. In

Islamic spiritual education, the elderly are encouraged to achieve self-actualization through devout worship, appreciation of religious values, and preparation for the afterlife. According to Syamsuddin (2021), Islamic spiritual education helps the elderly feel that they still have an important purpose in life, namely preparing themselves for the afterlife, which ultimately increases their happiness and life satisfaction.

Thus, Maslow's basic needs theory provides a strong perspective to understand the factors that influence the happiness of the elderly in nursing homes. Islamic spiritual education implemented in Panti Wredha Siti Khadijah Kota Cirebon plays an important role in fulfilling the spiritual and psychological needs of the elderly, which in turn improves their emotional well-being and happiness.

C. Relevant Research

Relevant research provides empirical evidence on the importance of spiritual education for the well-being of the elderly. A dissertation by Samsudin (2017) examined the impact of Islamic spiritual education on the quality of life of the elderly in nursing homes. The results showed that participants involved in the spiritual education program experienced significant improvements in aspects of happiness and life satisfaction, and felt more connected to their community. This suggests that spiritual education plays a crucial role in improving the quality of life of the elderly.

In his thesis, Riyanto (2018) explored the relationship between spiritual activities and the emotional well-being of the elderly. This study found that elderly who actively participated in spiritual activities tended to have lower levels of stress and anxiety. Riyanto also noted that group activities that focused on strengthening faith could strengthen social relationships in nursing homes, which contributed to their happiness. This finding is in line with Maslow's theory which emphasizes the importance of social needs in achieving happiness.

Johnson (2015) in his article entitled "The Influence of Religion on Successful Aging" highlights the role of religion and spirituality in the successful aging process. This study shows that elderly people who are involved in religious activities tend to have a better quality of life, feel more social support, and have a positive perspective on life. These findings suggest that spiritual education can serve as a protective mechanism against declining quality of life in the elderly.

Astuti (2016) also conducted a study showing that fulfilling psychological needs through spiritual activities contributes to the subjective well-being of the elderly. This study found that elderly people who participated in spiritual programs had higher levels of happiness and felt more at peace with their lives. These results indicate that spiritual education is not only important for religious aspects, but also for their emotional well-being.

Sulastrri (2018) in her study investigated the impact of Islamic spiritual education on the character of the elderly in nursing homes. She found that spiritual programs help the elderly develop positive attitudes and increase social interaction. These activities also provide them with the opportunity to share experiences and life lessons, which contribute to the formation of better character among residents of the nursing home.

Nugroho (2020) examined the impact of spiritual education programs in nursing homes on reducing anxiety and depression. This study shows that regular spiritual activities can provide a sense of purpose in life and reduce feelings of loneliness in the elderly. With programs designed to meet their spiritual and emotional needs, seniors can feel more empowered and happier even though they are in an environment separated from their families.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the influence of Islamic spiritual education on increasing the happiness of the elderly at Panti Wredha Siti Khadijah Kesambi. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the elderly regarding the spiritual education program implemented. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research allows researchers to understand the social and cultural context of the subjects studied, thus providing a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied.

The data in this study were collected through three techniques: interviews, observations, and document studies. Interviews were conducted with the caretakers of the caretakers, caregivers, and a number of elderly people to gain a direct perspective on the spiritual education program and its impact on their happiness. In the interviews, researchers used semi-structured interview guidelines to ensure that all important aspects were covered, such as participant experiences, expectations, and the impact of the program (Kvale, 2007). In addition, observations were conducted to understand the social dynamics during spiritual education activities, including interactions between caregivers and the elderly, which can create an atmosphere that supports happiness (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Document studies were conducted by analyzing activity records, annual reports, and materials used in spiritual education. This document analysis is important to complement the data obtained from interviews and observations, so that researchers can see the relationship between the implemented program and its influence on participant happiness (Bowen, 2009). The data analysis process was carried out inductively, where researchers identified key themes that emerged from the data and linked them to relevant theories to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Concept and Implementation of Islamic Spiritual Education at the Siti Khadijah Kesambi Nursing Home in Cirebon City

Based on the results of in-depth interviews and observations conducted at the Siti Khadijah Kesambi Nursing Home in Cirebon City, the concept of Islamic spiritual education at this home emphasizes the integration of Islamic religious values into the daily lives of the elderly residents. Routine activities such as congregational prayer, joint prayer, reading the Qur'an, Islamic studies, and spiritual guidance are the core of this program. The management of the home believes that through this spiritual approach, the elderly will feel calmer and more peaceful in facing the rest of their lives. This is in accordance with the view of Al-Ghazali (2020), who stated that spiritual education must be the main foundation in forming peace of mind for humans, especially in old age.

The implementation of spiritual education at this home is carried out consistently. Every day there are special times for collective worship, such as congregational prayer and religious studies. In addition, activities such as celebrating Islamic holidays, praying together, and religious lectures are also part of the orphanage's routine agenda. According to the results of observations, the involvement of the elderly in these activities is quite high. The elderly are not only present as participants, but also sometimes lead prayers or give short lectures. This active participation shows how important spiritual education is in increasing a sense of togetherness and supporting a more stable psychological condition for the elderly in the orphanage (Hasan, 2021).

In addition to worship and study activities, the implementation of spiritual education in this orphanage also involves personal guidance for the elderly who need special assistance. For example, several elderly residents who experience mental or physical health problems receive intensive guidance from the ustadz who works at the orphanage. This guidance is in the form of spiritual counseling and motivation so that they can accept their condition with patience and resignation. This approach is recognized by the elderly as a factor that helps them feel closer to God and accept their destiny with sincerity (Aziz, 2022).

B. Challenges in Implementing Islamic Spiritual Education and Increasing the Happiness of the Elderly

The implementation of Islamic spiritual education at the Siti Khadijah Nursing Home is inseparable from various challenges. One of the main challenges found in this study is the limited human resources who are competent in providing quality spiritual guidance. Although there are ustadz or religious teachers on duty at the nursing home, their number is still limited so that they are often unable to meet all the needs of the elderly who require special attention. According to the nursing home manager, this limited human resources is

caused by the lack of financial support to recruit more teachers or spiritual guides (Sari, 2021).

In addition to limited human resources, the facilities at the nursing home are also still limited to support the spiritual education program optimally. The Siti Khadijah Nursing Home does not have a special room for religious studies or large-scale worship activities. Therefore, collective worship activities are often carried out in a multifunctional hall. These limited facilities affect the comfort and quality of the religious activities held. The nursing home manager also admits that funding is one of the main obstacles that causes limitations in providing better facilities (Wahyuni, 2022).

Another challenge is the differences in the social and cultural backgrounds of the residents of the nursing home. The elderly who live in this shelter come from various regions and have different understandings of religious education. Some residents have a strong religious background, while others may not be accustomed to intense religious activities. This sometimes causes difficulties in creating a uniform atmosphere in the implementation of Islamic spiritual education programs. The shelter management continues to strive to overcome this challenge through a more personal and flexible approach in implementing the program (Johnson, 2019).

C. Elderly Response to the Implementation of Islamic Spiritual Education in Nursing Homes

The results of interviews and observations showed that the response of the nursing home residents to the implementation of Islamic spiritual education was very positive. The elderly were generally enthusiastic about participating in various religious activities held. Their participation in congregational worship activities, religious studies, and celebrations of major holidays showed high levels of active involvement. Most elderly people felt that this program helped them overcome loneliness and provided the emotional support they needed. Elderly people who participated in these activities felt an increase in inner peace, which also had a positive impact on their mental health (Riyanto, 2020).

Several elderly people interviewed stated that the Islamic spiritual education program helped them to better accept their physical conditions that were declining with age. They felt that through a spiritual approach, they could be more sincere and patient in dealing with illnesses or physical limitations they experienced. One elderly person said that he felt more peaceful after attending regular religious studies, because the studies reminded him of the afterlife and the importance of preparing himself to meet God (Syamsuddin, 2021).

However, not all elderly people responded to this program in the same way. Some residents, especially those who have just moved in, need time to adapt to the spiritual routines implemented in the shelter. Some of those who are not used to the intensity of religious activities feel awkward at first, but after some time, they start to enjoy and benefit from the activities. According to the shelter manager, support from

fellow residents and a personal approach help these elderly people adapt more quickly (Aziz, 2022).

D. Impact of the Implementation of Islamic Spiritual Education on the Happiness of the Elderly

The impact of the implementation of Islamic spiritual education at the Siti Khadijah Nursing Home on the happiness of the elderly is very significant. Residents of the shelter who are actively involved in spiritual activities consistently show an increase in emotional well-being and happiness. Based on the results of observations, elderly people who routinely participate in worship activities and religious studies look happier, calmer, and more optimistic in living their days. The Islamic spiritual education implemented in this shelter gives them a sense of security and certainty that they are not alone in facing old age (Handayani, 2021).

In addition to providing a sense of calm, Islamic spiritual education also helps the elderly overcome stress and anxiety that often arise in old age. Several residents of the shelter stated that they felt calmer after participating in activities such as group prayer or reading the Qur'an. This is in accordance with previous research which states that involvement in spiritual activities can reduce levels of anxiety and depression in the elderly (Gordon, 2020). Spiritual activities also provide structure in the daily lives of the elderly, which helps them stay active and involved in the social environment. Another positive impact is an increased sense of togetherness among the residents of the shelter. Through collective religious activities, the elderly feel closer to each other. They form stronger emotional bonds, which in turn increases overall happiness. Elderly people who previously felt isolated or had no friends became more open and active in interacting with fellow residents of the shelter. The shelter management also acknowledged that Islamic spiritual education provides not only spiritual but also social benefits for the elderly, which ultimately improves their quality of life (Siddiq, 2021).

V. CONCLUSION

This study shows that Islamic spiritual education has a significant impact on the happiness of the elderly in nursing homes. Through the implementation of educational programs involving spiritual learning, social activities, and emotional support, the elderly not only gain a better understanding of religious values but also feel more connected to fellow residents of the nursing home. This finding is in line with the results of previous studies, such as those presented by Samsudin (2017), which emphasized that spiritual education can improve the quality of life of the elderly. In addition, research by Riyanto (2018) emphasized the importance of spiritual activities in reducing stress and anxiety levels in the elderly, which was also found in this study.

Seeing the positive results of this Islamic spiritual education, it is recommended that nursing homes continue to develop programs that focus on strengthening spiritual values. This

can be done through training for staff in implementing educational activities that are interesting and beneficial for the elderly. In addition, it is also important to involve families in spiritual activities in the nursing home, so that interactions between the elderly and their families can be well-established, supporting their happiness and well-being. In the future, further research is needed to explore other aspects of spiritual education, such as its effects on the physical and mental health of the elderly in the long term. In addition, research can also consider other variables, such as social support from the community and the role of the community in supporting spiritual education programs in nursing homes. With a comprehensive approach, it is hoped that the welfare of the elderly can be improved as a whole.

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