

# The Role of Scholarships in Improving Access to Education in Private Schools

Suharyanto H. Soro<sup>1</sup>, Muhamad Hasan J<sup>2</sup>, Ashima Ailya<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Islam Nusantara, Indonesia; suharyantosoro@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Islam Nusantara, Indonesia; muhamadsanj@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup> Universitas Islam Nusantara, Indonesia; ashimaailya12@gmail.com

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## ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the fact that many students from financially disadvantaged families still have difficulty accessing education in private schools. Scholarships are believed to be one of the strategic solutions to increase access to education that is more equitable and inclusive. The purpose of this study is to find and analyze the role of scholarship programs in increasing access to education in private schools, especially in the Al-Masthuriyah Sukabumi Formal Diniyah Education (PDF). This study uses a case study approach. Data collection methods include observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. The results of the study indicate that there is no official SOP regarding the scholarship program at PDF Al-Masthuriyah. The implementation of scholarship assistance is carried out internally (including free tuition, dispensation, and cash) has been carried out based on certain criteria such as economic conditions and student achievement. The scholarship program has been proven to be able to help students from disadvantaged families to continue their education, increase learning motivation, and reduce dropout rates. In conclusion, with proper planning, implementation, evaluation, and follow-up, scholarships are not only a financial aid tool, but also an effective instrument for equalizing education.

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### **Corresponding Author:**

Suharyanto H. Soro

Universitas Islam Nusantara, Indonesia; suharyantosoro@gmail.com

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is defined as a conscious effort made by someone to get a change in behavior from not knowing to knowing, from negative to positive attitudes, and from not being creative to being creative. Bloomfield mentions the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains that exist in humans as learners. The three domains have different places. The cognitive domain is in the head, the affective domain is in the heart and the psychomotor domain is in the elements of the body, such as the hands and feet.

Education is one of the basic needs of humans as rational beings. Educational activities occur or take place in two forms, namely internally and externally. The form of internal activity in this context refers to a person's self-reflection on what is felt, experienced, and believed as something of knowledge value to be used as a basis for doing something in real life. While the external form refers to the process of acquiring knowledge through various learning activities sourced from other parties outside of the elements of the self concerned.

Education plays a fundamental role in human life as a foundation for developing individual capacity, improving living standards, and contributing to national progress. Through education, a person gains the knowledge, skills, and values needed to actively participate in society. In addition, education serves as an instrument of social mobility that enables individuals from low-income backgrounds to improve their quality of life. Therefore, access to quality education must be guaranteed for all citizens without exception. Education is a basic right of every child and is the main key in efforts to improve the quality of life of individuals and society as a whole. As a form of constitutional responsibility, the state is obliged to protect, uphold, and fulfill the right of every citizen to obtain an education. This is in line with the mandate of the 1945 Constitution Article 31 Paragraph (1) which states that every citizen has the right to receive education and the government is obliged to finance the education of citizens. The government has established various policies to realize this, one of which is through the 12-year compulsory education program.

The strategic policy is implemented through the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture (Permendikbud) Number 19 of 2016 concerning the 12-Year Compulsory Education Program. This program aims to expand access to education up to the upper secondary level in order to reduce the dropout rate and improve the quality of Indonesia's human resources. However, the implementation of this policy faces real challenges in the field. In reality, not all children in Indonesia can access proper education, especially those from underprivileged families. Economic limitations are often the main barrier for children from marginalized backgrounds to continue their education, even from elementary school level.

One of the main obstacles in equalizing access to education is the lack of availability of public schools in various regions, especially in rural and suburban areas. The Zoning System Policy implemented since 2017 has actually worsened this condition, where students are required to attend school in their domicile area but often there are no public schools in the zone. Based on data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2023) in the "National Education Statistics" report, the ratio of inequality in the number of public versus private schools for high school level is 26% to 74%, vocational high school 49% to 51%. For junior high school level 56% to 43%, and elementary school 87% to 13%. As a result, many students are systematically forced to attend private educational institutions due to the lack of public alternatives in their residential zone.

This phenomenon is further complicated by the public perception that the quality of private schools is superior to public schools. According to a study, 42% of urban parents believe that private schools provide better quality education with complete facilities and more personalized teaching. This assumption is often not entirely accurate because many public schools actually have superior quality, but still influence public preferences in choosing schools. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2022, around 2.96% of Indonesia's population is still recorded as having no or never having received any education at all. This figure indicates that there are still groups of people who have not accessed the education system, including those who are actually academically capable but are constrained by geographical and economic factors to attend private schools.

Scholarships are defined as a form of award given to individuals to continue their education to a higher level. The award can be in the form of certain access to an institution or an award in the form of financial assistance (Kuswanto & Sa'adah, 2022).

Scholarships are assistance to help students or college students who are still in school or college so that they can complete their tasks in seeking knowledge until completion. Scholarships in the form of assistance can be in the form of funds to support costs that must be incurred by students or college students (Renaldo, Anggraeni, & Rudi, 2019).

Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system in Chapter V Article 12 (1. C) states that every student in every educational unit has the right to receive a scholarship for those who excel whose parents are unable to finance their education. Article 12 (1. D) states that every student in every educational unit has the right to receive education costs for those whose parents are unable to finance their education (Depdiknas, 2009).

From the various definitions above, the definition of a scholarship can be concluded as the provision of educational assistance to students with limited economic means or as a form of appreciation or award to students who have achievements with the aim of improving the quality of education and continuing to a higher level of education.

Massapeary stated that the purpose of providing achievement scholarships is as follows:

- 1) Increase learning motivation and academic achievement
- 2) Increase access and learning opportunities, especially for those with high academic potential.
- 3) Ensure the continuity of student studies
- 4) Improve student achievement in academic fields
- 5) Creates a positive impact on students to always improve their achievements
- 6) Producing graduates who are independent, productive and have social awareness

So that scholarships can play a role in efforts to break the chain of poverty (Ihsan, 2010).

#### **A. Access to Education**

Access to education is one of the main indicators in realizing equality and justice in the education system. Conceptually, access to education refers to the ability of individuals or groups to obtain the opportunity to study in educational institutions without being hindered by economic, geographical, social, or cultural factors. The wider and more open access to education, the greater the opportunity for society to improve the standard of living and quality of human resources.

According to the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Article 1 paragraph (1) states that Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have spiritual religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble morals, and the skills needed by themselves, society, the nation and the state.

From this understanding, it can be understood that education is the right of every citizen that aims to develop potential comprehensively. Therefore, access to quality education is an absolute requirement so that the goals of national education as formulated in the law can be achieved.

This access leads us to a place where there is a learning atmosphere and a structured, safe learning process that supports the growth of various potentials of students. In other words, access to education is not just a matter of physical presence in the classroom, but includes the rights and opportunities to participate in a meaningful and quality education process. In this context, the scholarship program has a strategic role in encouraging equality and expansion of access to education.

Efforts to equalize and expand access to education aim to increase the capacity of educational institutions while ensuring equal learning opportunities for all students, without distinguishing between socio-economic background, gender, geographic location, cognitive ability, or physical condition.

Investment in human resource development, acceleration of social movements, and creation of social justice must begin with ensuring accessibility to a quality education system that is affordable for all levels of society. Therefore, the state through its government is obliged to facilitate equal distribution of quality education. The implementation of various initiatives needs to be continuously strengthened in order to realize equal access to quality education for all citizens.

Economic factors are the main obstacle to access to education, especially in private schools. High operational costs cause private schools to impose higher levies than public schools. In fact, for many families, private schools are often the only option due to the lack of public alternatives in their area. One strategic solution to overcome these barriers to access to education is through scholarships. Scholarships are a form of financial assistance given to high-achieving students or those from underprivileged families as support to continue their education without being burdened by financial problems. Scholarships not only help ease the economic burden on families, but also provide greater motivation and opportunities for children to achieve their dreams.

In this context, various government and private institutions have developed scholarship programs with the aim of expanding access to education for all groups. Scholarships not only ease the financial burden of families, but also ensure the continuity of education for potential students from underprivileged backgrounds. However, the effectiveness and real role of scholarships in increasing school participation of underprivileged children is still a relevant topic for further research. The right scholarship mechanism can be an equalizer in the education system, especially in private schools that have so far received less attention.

Scholarships not only function as a means of financial assistance, but also act as an instrument of social affirmation to reach marginalized groups, become a stimulus for increasing academic achievement through competition, and long-term human resource investment. Scholarships are not just charity, but an essential component in an inclusive education ecosystem. The gap between ideal goals and reality in the field is what underlies this research. Analyzing the role of scholarships in increasing access to education in private schools is important to study in order to gain a deeper understanding. How does the role of scholarships bridge the inequality of access to education, especially in private schools.

This study aims to explore more deeply the role of scholarships in improving access to education in schools for children from underprivileged families. This study also aims to provide a factual picture of the impact of scholarships on students' learning motivation and the sustainability of their education, as well as provide input for policy makers to develop more targeted and sustainable scholarship programs. Al-Masthuriyah Islamic boarding school is one of the Islamic boarding schools in Sukabumi that has a private educational institution, one of which is the Formal Diniyah Education (PDF) which has a scholarship mechanism for students (students) that has been proven effective in improving access to education.

## 2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach to explore in depth the role of scholarship programs in increasing access to education in private schools, in this case focusing on Al-Masthuriyah Formal Diniyah Education (PDF). This approach was chosen because it is able to reveal the

complexity of social phenomena related to scholarship policies, barriers to access to education, and the perceptions of beneficiaries (students, parents, and institutional managers). Qualitative research is often used by academics because it focuses on specific cases that occur in the work environment. This is one of the reasons why the case study approach is widely chosen. Suharyanto H. Soro (2023) states that qualitative research is a series of scientific activities carried out systematically and aims to find solutions and describe phenomena, events, or social behavior that occur in natural conditions (natural settings).

The researcher used a participatory observation method on the scholarship administration process and the learning activities of its recipients, and conducted in-depth interviews as a method of data collection with various stakeholders including scholarship recipients, institutional managers, and funding providers. This case study provides an opportunity for researchers to analyze every aspect related to the impact of the scholarship in detail, including how the scholarship helps overcome economic constraints and increase educational participation in the Al-Masthuriyah PDF environment. The case study approach is very effective in exploring the real situations experienced by students and education stakeholders, thus providing in-depth insights into the dynamics of access to education through scholarship programs in private schools based on diniyah education.

Researchers take samples or respondents purposively. The sample or selected respondents are used as the next data source for analysis so that it can be used as a research result. The number of respondents was eight people. They are people who are directly involved with scholarship activities. This research will take place in the 2024-2025 academic year located at PDF Al-Masthuriyah Sukabumi.

### 3. DISCUSSION

The issuance of the Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs (PMA) Number 13 of 2014 concerning Islamic Religious Education gives great hope for the development of Islamic boarding school (dayah) education in the archipelago. The reason is, this PMA provides legal legitimacy for the presence of the Formal Diniyah Education (PDF) program, an education program in the Islamic boarding school environment that is equivalent to Schools and Madrasahs and will also be funded by the state. The birth of this Formal Diniyah Education program began with a long research by the Ministry of Religious Affairs Research and Development which found the fact that in schools so far religious subjects have only been taught 2-3 hours of lessons/week. Likewise with Madrasahs where religious subjects are developed through only 5 subjects, namely the Qur'an-Hadith, Akidah-Akhlak, Fiqh, History of Islamic Culture, and Arabic. This is considered not yet capable of producing new cadres of ulama who are *mutaffa'uh fiddin*.

In the initial stage, there are five provinces that will be used as pilot projects for this Formal Diniyah Education, namely Aceh, East Java, West Java, Central Java and South Sulawesi. The presence of this PDF is an effort by the Ministry of Religion and Islamic Boarding Schools to realize graduates of education who have reliable Islamic religious knowledge competencies (*mutafaqqih fiddin*) both at the Ula, Wustha (basic education) and 'Ulya (secondary education) levels. The Formal Diniyah Education Program is a Formal Education unit organized by and within Islamic boarding schools (dayah) using structured and hierarchical literature to produce graduates who have mastery of Islamic religious knowledge (*mutafaqqih fiddin*) which includes Formal Diniyah Education Ula, Wustha and 'Ulya.

If the public school level starts from Elementary School, Junior High School, Senior High School and General College, and Madrasah starts from MI, MTs and Islamic Religious College, then the path of Formal Diniyah Education is from the Ula, Wustha, Ulya levels and continues to the Ma'had 'Aly level. This Formal Diniyah Education program was established to provide the rights of the nation's

children, will be recognized by the state and will be fully funded by the state, both teacher salaries and other needs. All teachers who will manage this Formal Diniyah Education program are the pesantren teachers themselves who have met the criteria such as having earned a bachelor's degree and based on applicable laws and regulations. These teachers will also be certified by the curriculum.

The curriculum set by the Central Ministry of Religious Affairs for this program, for the Ula level are subjects such as the Qur'an, Hadith, Tauhid, Fiqh, Akhlaq, Tarikh and Arabic. While for the Wustha level, the subjects consist of the Qur'an, Tauhid, Tarikh, Hadith-Hadith Science, Fiqh-Ushul Fiqh, Akhlaq-Sufism, Arabic, Nahwu-Sharf, Balaghah and Kalam Science. While for the 'Ulya level, the subjects consist of the Qur'an, Tauhid, Tarikh, Hadith-Hadith Science, Fiqh-Ushul Fiqh, Akhlaq-Sufism, Tafsir-Tafsir Science, Arabic, Nahwu-Sharf, Balaghah, Kalam Science, 'Arudh Science, Mantiq Science and Falak Science. Most of these subjects have indeed been the basic curriculum of dayah education in Aceh.

In addition to the Islamic subjects above, in this Formal Diniyah Education, there are also general subjects that are mandatory, but these general subjects will be packaged in an Islamic and integrative way where the guidebooks are also written in Arabic.

Based on the results of field research and qualitative data analysis that have been conducted, there are a number of important findings that reflect empirical conditions in the field and also show their relationship to the theories that have been described in the literature review and theoretical framework in Chapter II. Thus, the following discussion will systematically describe the main findings and link them directly to relevant theories as a basis for analysis, starting from the planning process to the follow-up to the scholarship program.

### **Scholarship Program Planning (Plan)**

In the planning stage, the school developed a strategy to overcome the economic limitations of students so that they can still get access to decent education. The school saw the real conditions in the field that many students have a high enthusiasm for learning, but are hampered by financial problems. From this condition, the school took the initiative to work with the finance department to develop a solution by providing educational assistance. Although there is no written and officially documented SOP, the school already has an internal policy in the form of BDB, namely Free of Cost. The criteria set are first orphans and poor students as evidenced by a certificate of poverty from the village. Second, are students who excel with the highest average score at the end of the school year.

The form of the scholarship is divided into 3 patterns, namely free tuition fees for 6 months, Cash for outstanding students and relief or reduction of payments for underprivileged students. The source of funding for this scholarship is obtained from internal funds from the Guardian Contribution and external assistance funds, namely from BOS, PIP, or grants and Alms from the Community. Every year an evaluation is carried out to assess the effectiveness, accuracy of targets and transparency of the implementation of the scholarship.

Based on the results of the study, it shows that this scholarship program is expected to be a form of social concern, as well as a means of empowerment for students who have good academic potential and character, but are constrained in terms of financing. This is in line with the theory (Renaldo, Anggraeni, & Rudi, 2019) that scholarships are assistance to help students or students who are still in school or college so that they can complete their tasks in seeking knowledge until finished. Scholarships in the form of assistance can be in the form of funds to support costs that must be incurred by students or students.

The main source of scholarship funding comes from the institution's internal funds. These funds mainly come from monthly financial income paid by guardians or guardians of students as a form of participation in financing education. In addition, there are also other sources of funds that come from government assistance programs, such as School Operational Assistance (BOS) and the Smart Indonesia Program (PIP), which are routinely received by the institution and then allocated to help students who meet certain criteria. This is stated in the Republic of Indonesia Law number 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system in chapter V article 12 (1. C) states that every student in every educational unit has the right to receive a scholarship for those who excel whose parents are unable to finance their education. Article 12 (1. D) states that every student in every educational unit has the right to receive education costs for those whose parents are unable to finance their education (Depdiknas, 2009).

### **Scholarship program implementation process (Do)**

The implementation stage is the implementation of the scholarship plan that has been prepared, adjusted to field conditions and administrative readiness. The application procedure is carried out by parents or guardians of students submitting an application accompanied by a SKTM then agreed upon with the school. Verification is carried out simply, there is no complex verification process. Simply based on trust and the initial documents submitted. The form of scholarship provided is adjusted, either free of tuition fees, reduced tuition fees, or exemption from development costs depending on the economic ability of the parents.

For the Achievement scholarship, it is given through academic selection and achievement recapitulation when moving up a class. The socialization of this scholarship is carried out during the new student registration process, especially if the guardian expresses financial constraints. Evaluation of its implementation is carried out by the curriculum, student affairs, and finance teams periodically to ensure the accuracy of implementation. It was conveyed that the form of scholarship or what we call BDB depends on the parents' ability to finance it, usually in the form of free tuition fees, dispensation (reduction in the nominal tuition fee) or development money which is given at any time as long as the student does not commit any violations. As for the form of cash and free tuition fees when moving up a class through the selection of outstanding students. This is in accordance with the theory in (Kuswanto & Sa'adah, 2022) which states that scholarships are a form of appreciation given to individuals so that they can continue their education to a higher level. The award can be in the form of certain access to an institution or an award in the form of financial assistance.

There is a scholarship socialization carried out when registration takes place if there are parents who ask for relief in terms of financing, this is in accordance with access to education that is one of the main indicators in realizing equality and justice in the education system. Conceptually, access to education refers to the ability of individuals or groups to obtain the opportunity to study at educational institutions without being hindered by economic, geographical, social, or cultural factors. The wider and more open access to education, the greater the opportunity for society to improve the standard of living and quality of human resources.

### **Scholarship Program Evaluation (Check)**

The indicators we use in assessing the success of this program are firstly discipline in all matters including diligence in attending school, diligence in participating in learning, extracurricular activities and other activities such as: pengajian, muhadoroh and so on. Secondly, academic achievement such as: test scores, memorization and so on. This is related to Massapeary's theory in (Ihsan, 2010) which states that the purpose of providing achievement scholarships is as follows: Increasing learning motivation and academic achievement, Increasing access and learning opportunities especially those

with high academic potential, Ensuring the continuity of student studies, Increasing student achievement in the academic field, Creating a positive impact for students to always improve their achievements, Producing independent, productive graduates, and having social awareness so that they are able to play a role in efforts to break the chain of poverty.

The results of the study also show that there are challenges and obstacles found during the implementation of the scholarship, this reflects the high need for students for financial support in completing their education. If an evaluation is held, this access will lead to a place where there is a learning atmosphere and a structured, safe learning process that supports the growth of various potentials of students. In other words, access to education is not just a matter of physical presence in the classroom, but includes the rights and opportunities to participate in a meaningful and quality education process. In this context, the scholarship program has a strategic role in encouraging equality and expansion of access to education.

### **Follow Up (Act)**

The provision of scholarships in this institution is carried out continuously and has improved from year to year. These improvements include the recipient selection process, fund distribution methods, to reporting and monitoring mechanisms. The main objective of this effort is so that scholarships are truly received by students or students who are more deserving, meaning those who meet the criteria economically, academically or socially. This is in line with efforts to equalize and expand access to education aimed at increasing the capacity of educational institutions while ensuring equal learning opportunities for all students, without distinguishing socio-economic background, gender, geographic location, cognitive ability, or physical condition.

Increasing accuracy in determining scholarship recipients is expected to reduce the potential for inaccuracy of targets, while increasing trust from all parties, both internal and external, in the transparency and accountability of the institution. Thus, scholarships can have a real impact because this is included in the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Article 1 paragraph (1) states that Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have spiritual religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble morals, and skills needed by themselves, society, nation and state. Helping the continuity of education for students in need.

To achieve ideal scholarship management, careful, structured, and accountable planning is required. This planning includes budget preparation, determination of recipient criteria, monitoring system, and reporting on the use of funds. All of these processes must be implemented by prioritizing the principles of openness and responsibility, so that all parties, especially parents, donors, and other stakeholders can monitor and evaluate their implementation. This is in accordance with the theory because investment in human resource development, acceleration of social movements, and creation of social justice must begin with ensuring accessibility to a quality education system that is affordable for all levels of society. Therefore, the state through its government is obliged to facilitate the equal distribution of quality education. The implementation of various initiatives needs to be continuously strengthened in order to realize equal access to quality education for all citizens.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

The Role of Scholarships in Improving Access to Education in Private Schools at PDF Al-Masthuriyah has been in accordance with the theory. Although there are still some things that need to be developed. Al-Masthuriyah Formal Diniyah Education has not been stated in the form of an official



SOP, but is run flexibly in response to the economic conditions of students. Scholarships are given to orphans, poor, or high-achieving students with funding from the institution's internal funds and government assistance. Annual evaluations are carried out to adjust the program so that it remains on target, relevant, and sustainable.

The implementation of the scholarship program at Al-Masthuriyah Formal Diniyah Education is carried out flexibly based on an agreement between parents and the school, with verification using a certificate of poverty. Scholarships are given in the form of free or reduced tuition fees, as well as cash for outstanding students when moving up a class. Socialization is carried out during registration, and routine evaluations are carried out by the curriculum, student affairs, and finance teams to ensure the program is running on target.

Evaluation of the scholarship program at Al-Masthuriyah Formal Diniyah Education was conducted by assessing student discipline and academic achievement as the main indicators. Although the school is open to input, student and parent participation in providing feedback is still minimal. The school is committed to developing a sustainable scholarship program by improving the selection, distribution, and reporting processes. Accountable and open planning is the basis for increasing public trust and ensuring that scholarships are right on target and have a real impact on students in need.

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