

When Factory Uniforms Are More Valuable Than Lecture Books: An Analysis of the Sociology of Education and the Spiritual Reorientation of Science

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to comprehensively uncover the complexity of the "Tegal Laka-Laka Paradox", a social phenomenon in which factory uniforms are considered much more valuable than textbooks through three main analytical focuses. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, data was collected through unstructured interview techniques, participatory observation, and document analysis, which were then tested for validity through data triangulation. Important findings suggest that the public's preference for factory uniforms is not a sign of ignorance, but rather a rational survival strategy due to structural economic pressures and job market uncertainty for students. This systemic pressure shifts the meaning of education from the ideals of character formation to pure pragmatism as an administrative ticket that triggers a teleological crisis of the spiritual value of science. As a transformative solution, this research offers the concept of *Ihya Ulumuddin* to restore the dignity of education through the reorientation of learning intention as worship and the elimination of the sharp dichotomy between the industrial and academic worlds of work. This conclusion confirms that without the restoration of transcendental meaning, education will only produce a soulless productive "robot worker" in the midst of the ferocity of the current of modern industrialization. This research contributes to enriching the literature on the sociology of education by offering a model of spiritual intervention based on local wisdom that bridges the gap between urgent economic needs and long-term educational ideals holistically.

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INTRODUCTION

Ideally, (Hukama, 2017) Higher education is referred to as a ladder of social mobility and intellectual investment that guarantees long-term well-being. However, the current reality shows a sharp paradox in which factory uniforms are considered more valuable than college books by young people (Arif et al., 2025; Hadiati et al., 2025; Indasari, 2026). Instant economic pressures force economically weakened families to prioritize a fixed daily wage rather than going into debt to get a diploma that doesn't promise a return on capital (Ihsan et al., 2025; Ma'arif et al., 2025). This phenomenon manifests a devaluation of the meaning of education due to the failure of social structures in integrating graduates with the actual job market. As a result, the essence of man as a thinking being is eroded into a mere instrument of production, where the value of short-term practical use trumps long-term wisdom (Aslihah & Wasehudin, 2023; Budiartini et al., 2025; Izzah & Magfiroh, 2025; Yunus et al., 2025). This condition demands a deep understanding of how society balances the need for survival with the hope of an increasingly vague promise of education.

This educational paradox has been studied extensively, highlighting structural problems in Indonesia. Study by (Suryadarma & Jones, 2013) and (Ardhana et al., 2025) find a mismatch of curriculum skills with industry, while (Beta, 2026) Recording inflation degrees that hinder job absorption. (Kurniawan & Rojabi, 2026) and (Aprilianty et al., 2023; Grillo & Nanetti, 2020; Jose et al., 2025) Confirm the existence of instant work preference and the devaluation of bachelor's degrees globally. However, there is research *Gaps*; Most of the previous research focused on macroeconomic and statistical aspects. There has been no research that explores the psychosocial dimension and identity construction of students transitioning into factory workers. The novelty of this research lies in the phenomenological analysis of the negotiation of self-esteem and the meaning of life when intellectual symbols are exchanged for industrial symbols, as well as offering strategic solutions through the perspective of Islamic Education to fill the gaps in the analysis.

This research aims to uncover the complexity of the "Tegal Laka-Laka Paradox" through three focuses: investigation of socio-economic factors, excavation of the construction of educational meaning, and offer *Ihya Ulumuddin concept* as a solution to restore the dignity of knowledge. Tegal was chosen as the locus because of its position as the epicenter of the manufacturing industry which creates a sharp contrast between instant job opportunities and academic ideals. The urgency of this research is to break the chain of shifting the meaning of education which now tends to be a labor commodity, so that the younger generation is not trapped in narrow pragmatism. Through the approach of local wisdom and religious values, this research seeks to save the dignity of education from the hegemony of industrial capitalism. It is very important to ensure that economic development does not sacrifice the quality of the soul and intelligence of the nation, in order to create a dignified and balanced social order between temporal and spiritual needs (Eja, 2025).

The first theoretical foundation focuses on the sociology of education which analyzes the devaluation of the meaning of education due to massive industrialization. The shift in value from books to uniforms is understood through structural pragmatism and rational choice theory, in which society performs pragmatic cost-benefit calculations. If a bachelor's degree does not guarantee a quick return on economic capital, its symbolic value will decline. This is in line with the view of Sanusi et al. (2022) that changes in economic structure significantly change social existence. This phenomenon triggers a teleological crisis, where the orientation to study is only to meet the needs of the job market (Azra, 2019). Sociological theory is used to dissect how economic pressures change sociocultural perceptions of science, making factory uniforms a symbol of instant financial success that is more valued than lecture books that are considered a consumptive burden with no certainty of the future.

The second theoretical foundation adopts the concept by *Ihya Ulumuddin* Imam Al-Ghazali to revive the dignity of knowledge from the current of materialism. This theory offers a spiritual

reorientation in which the pursuit of knowledge is positioned as transcendental worship, rather than simply a mechanistic process of attaining a degree. It is supported by (Setiawan, 2018) Research on the importance of the virtues of science so that education does not lose its spirit. Al-Ghazali emphasized the integration of religious and secular sciences to eliminate the dichotomy between academics and industrial workers. Science serves to shape human character and ethics as a whole, not to produce soulless "productive robots." This approach provides the basis that the solution to the devaluation of education lies in the restoration of intention and existential awareness. The integration of spiritual values is expected to build students' mental resilience so that they still have intellectual pride when facing the reality of industrialization which often views humans only as a means of production.

As a synthesis, this research refers to (Sonia, 2022) Thinking about the integration of curriculum interconnection approaches to bridge the academic world and industrial needs. This study hypothesizes that the shift in educational values is the impact of systemic pressures that obscure the essence of science as a pillar of civilization. By combining sociological theory and Islamic educational philosophy, this research builds the foundation that educational success is not only measured by the speed of graduates' work, but also by the extent to which human dignity is maintained in the midst of industrial pressure. The combination of these perspectives is a reference for examining the "Tegal Laka-Laka Paradox" as a reality that requires comprehensive handling, both structurally and spiritually. This study concludes that educational transformation requires a solid balance between meeting material needs and maintaining the dignity of science in order to maintain humanity in the modern era.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the depth of meaning behind the paradoxical phenomenon of education in Tegal in detail. The focus of the research is limited to the tied system in Tegal Regency/City as the specific locus of the "Laka-Laka" phenomenon, which allows researchers to understand the cultural and economic context holistically without premature generalizations (Scott, 2020). The researchers engaged directly in the field to observe the natural interactions between industry and society to avoid bias. This design flexibility allows for the adaptation of questions as new data is discovered to ensure local nuances are accurately captured. Through this approach, this study uncovers the structure of meaning that shapes people's preference for factory uniforms over textbooks in a fundamental way (Moleong & Surjaman, 2014). This process requires the reflexivity of researchers to maintain objectivity as well as ecological validity so that research results can be accounted for academically as a real representation of the social conditions of industrial society.

Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted for 180 minutes in 3 sessions with 8 selected keynote speakers *intentionally*. The informants consisted of female factory workers, students, and parents to get a balanced perspective. The interview uses Javanese language to maintain the authenticity of expression, then transliterates and translates for the benefit of international publications. Privacy is maintained by disguising names using initials such as P1-P8 or M1-M8 in accordance with the code of conduct. Observations were made in factory and home settings to see the true context of the use of uniforms versus books, supported by the analysis of regional statistical documents and local education policies (Bungin, 2007). This protocol ensures that the integrity of qualitative data remains accurate, where the sharing of interview sessions facilitates the development of *strong relationship so that* Interviewees are more open to sharing sensitive experiences related to family economic pressures.

Table 1: Informant Profiles

Nope.	Initials	Gender	Place of Duty/Residence		Age
1.	P	Women	PT Garmen		20 years
2.	P1	Women	PT Garmen		43 years old
3.	OP	Women	Home		40 years
4.	M1	Women	UPS Tegal		20 years
5.	M2	Women	UIN Malang		20 years
6.	OM1	Women	Home		40 years
7.	OM2	Male	Home		52 years old
8.	S	Male	Islamic School	Boarding	25 years

The validity of the data is maintained through source triangulation techniques and techniques to rigorously test the validity of the findings. Data analysis refers to Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes three streams: condensation of data to focus the core of the story, presentation of data in the form of a structured narrative, and drawing conclusions through gradual verification (Soetopo, 2002). This model allows for systematic management of big data without losing its original context. Each initial finding is re-validated through discussions with the resource person to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation. The process of repeated analysis allows researchers to return to the field if further clarification is needed. Thus, the resulting conclusions are the result of rigorous verification that can be scientifically accounted for (Miles et al., 1992). This method ensures that the Islamic Education solutions offered are based on valid empirical data, so that policy recommendations have a strong foundation to improve the dignity of education in the midst of the industrialization siege in Tegal.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Sociological-Economic Factors: Why people in urban areas in Indonesia tend to think that factory uniforms have a higher utility value than textbooks

The findings of this study reveal three main socio-economic factors that cause people to value factory uniforms more than lecture books. First, the pressures of urban living costs force families to prioritize instant cash flow through fixed factory wages, while college is considered a risky investment with abstract returns. Second, urban social stratification measures success through financial independence; Factory workers are validated as real economic contributors, while college students are often stigmatized as consumptive burdens. Third, the saturation of the job market of undergraduate graduates compared to the massive manufacturing industry encourages rational calculation of public risk. The selection of factory uniforms is a smart adaptation strategy to an economic structure that is not friendly to young intellectuals without social capital. Therefore, uniforms are a symbol of economic security, so policy intervention is needed to restore the balance of educational values in the future.

Sociologically, factory uniforms in Tegal function as a symbol of financial independence that provides a high bargaining position. This phenomenon is reflected in P's experience who feels proud to be able to provide concrete services through material donations to his mother. The industrial community applies a standard of empirical success that is seen in a short period of time. Uniforms are not only work clothes, but also identities that transition into productive adult subjects. This is validated by P1, which states that factory uniforms signify that one is no longer an economic burden on the elderly. The environment gives workers a higher respect because of their ability to buy their own needs. In contrast to students who dwell on abstract theories, factory uniforms provide instant certainty of status and social respect in industrial areas.

The dominance of uniform grades is also triggered by the calculation of risks to university investment which is full of uncertainty. Informant S admitted that there was inner turmoil because he was financially backward compared to his colleagues who were already established in the industrial world. Textbooks are seen as a high-risk investment because they are expensive and do not guarantee the availability of decent employment. This encourages vulnerable economic families to take pragmatic steps to survive. The OP bolsters this argument with the logic of household economics that working is more of a guarantee of family kitchen help than a lengthy college. For working-class people in Tegal, financial security today is more urgent than the promise of an imaginary welfare future. Thus, factory uniforms are the most logical survival strategy in the midst of structural economic pressures.

The speed of gaining social recognition makes factory uniforms have a dominant dignity in the Tegal industrial ecosystem. Informant S noted that factory uniforms were more quickly valued collectively because of concrete outcomes, such as fixed income and the ability to purchase personal goods. In contrast, scientific authorities often experience "meaning delays" and are prone to negative stigma during the research period. People tend to be skeptical of academic activities that do not produce direct economic value. This phenomenon is explained by OM1 that the environment values the ownership of materials, such as a new motorcycle, more than GPA values. Spontaneous recognition was given to factory workers, while students were considered to have no clear material future. The usefulness of the uniform won the symbolic contest because it answered the public's need for visible proof of success, thus lowering the prestige of academic degrees in the eyes of the public.

Cultural pressure regarding the productive age limit and material service obligations causes the educational path to be considered to hinder the family's social contract. Informant P revealed the moral burden to immediately contribute to the economy before reaching the age of marriage. There is a strict time target in Tegal for children to repay the cost of parenting. The four-year college path is considered to reduce the duration of the child's productive period. OM2 emphasizes emotionally that children must return material favors before having a family, so as not to lose momentum to please parents. In conclusion, factory uniforms were chosen because they allow for the effective and concise fulfillment of these ethical obligations. This tradition of material services degrades the strategic value of science because it is considered that it cannot be used directly for home renovation needs or daily family expenses.

The inequality between industrial growth and the low absorption of the educated workforce causes the bachelor's diploma to lose its dignity as a tool of vertical mobility. Informant S reflects that in the reality of the job market, a diploma is often just a minimalist administrative requirement with no guarantee of success. Society adapts by valuing field experience more than lecture theory. When many scholars are unemployed, there is a crisis of trust in educational institutions. OM1 made a sharp criticism that many clerics today are "neatly unemployed", so wearing factory uniforms with a secondary diploma is considered more feasible to finance a life without uncertainty. The failure of the education system to promise material welfare has marginalized textbooks as an unproductive cost burden, while factory uniforms are revered as a real solution to the cycle of systemic poverty.

How society interprets the purpose of education: whether it is just a way to make money (pragmatic) or a way to improve one's quality (ideality)

The findings of the study reveal a drastic shift in the meaning of education in Tegal from idealism to pure pragmatism. First, education is interpreted instrumentally as an administrative ticket to finding a job, rather than a process of internalizing values. Second, there is an erosion of the meaning of education due to economic pressure that views knowledge as a commodity for survival. Spiritual values are subject to materialistic targets, so work uniforms are more sacred

than textbooks. Third, there is a hybrid meaning where education is considered ideal only if it is relevant to the needs of the industry. This condition reflects a teleological crisis; The purpose of education is narrowed to the accumulation of economic capital. As a result, students' motivation to study becomes fragile because they are only pursuing certification. Without value intervention, education in Tegal is just a soulless work factory, where the function of education is badly defeated by the economic function in the increasingly pragmatic social construction of society.

Informant P admitted that his main motivation was to earn money for his family's lifestyle and finances, reflecting the dominance of the manufacturing industry mindset. Philosophical analysis shows the occurrence of the desacralization of science; Learning is no longer a rational breeding process, but an instrument of monthly wage administration. P1 supports this view by stating that the purpose of schools is to make it easier to make money. If higher education continues to make a living, the path is considered unnecessary. For P1, education is a tool to change the fate of the economy, not a space for intellectual debate. In conclusion, industrial society is experiencing a teleological reduction in which science loses its spiritual dimension to become a mere commodity. This paradox positions education as valuable only if it correlates linearly with income, while the ideal of intellectual enrichment is considered an abstract concept irrelevant to real-world demands.

The concept of "self-quality" in Tegal has narrowed its meaning, where the standard of excellence is measured through financial contribution rather than depth of character. The ideality of forming a whole human being is considered abstract and insignificant for daily needs. Informant P felt that his quality was questioned by the environment if he could not afford to give fixed money to his mother, even though he was interested in studying. Sociological analysis shows that personal success has been commodified in an industrial ecosystem that prioritizes physical outcomes. The OP emphasizes that material productivity is a key indicator of intelligence; Smart children are not those who read a lot of books, but those who are able to be economically independent and do not disturb their parents. This view proves that material pragmatism has replaced academic ideals. Education that does not result in physical renovation of the house is considered to have failed to carry out its function as an agent of human self-development in the eyes of the collective.

M1 and M2 students experience severe psychological distress due to the comparison of materials with colleagues who work in factories. M1 expresses guilt when he asks for semester money while his friend, in a factory uniform, can afford to buy personal assets. Analysis shows that there is a crisis of meaning; The academic path is considered an "economic sin" because it prolongs financial dependence on the elderly. This is exacerbated by environmental innuendo, as conveyed by OM2, which compares the financial success of workers with students who still ask for photocopying money. The question of when cleverness makes money becomes an immense mental burden. This sociological pressure shifts the goal of education from the pursuit of knowledge to a pragmatic effort to find a diploma as soon as possible to pay off the moral debt of the family. The ideals of education finally faded, making higher education an administrative competition to immediately enter the world of work.

For parents in industrialized areas, higher education is seen as a long-term economic investment in the hope of a quick return on capital. OM1 states that children should immediately work in factories if the future of their undergraduate career does not provide financial certainty for their families. The analysis shows that parents see college as a great financial risk amid urgent life needs. This pragmatic logic aims for children to become "people", which means to become rich and get out of poverty. If graduates are unemployed, it is considered to have suffered a large loss because capital investment does not yield results. In conclusion, the meaning of education for parents is purely instrumental-economic, while intellectual quality is only a complementary

variable. If textbooks do not guarantee better financial security than factory uniforms, parents are more likely to direct their children to factories to avoid the risk of investment failure.

Informant S provides critical reflection that today's bachelor's degree is no longer a "golden ticket", but merely an administrative requirement in a competitive job market. Relying on a formal diploma without practical skills and strong relationships is considered a big mistake. Analysis of S's statement shows that there is a saturation of the meaning of formal education in an industrial society. The inability of undergraduate graduates to perform more financially successful than factory workers has destroyed the prestige of higher education in the eyes of the public. This is validated by OM1's skeptical response to the large number of undergraduate students who are unemployed. For him, factory uniforms are better because the results are visible every month without having to wait for an uncertain job call. The community interprets the goals of education pragmatically because the economic ecosystem of Tegal does not provide space for intellectual ideals without concrete financial results, thus triggering a loss of trust in education.

Islamic Education Perspective: How the concept of *Ihya Ulumuddin* (Reviving knowledge) can be a solution to restore the dignity of education in the midst of the siege of industrialization

The research formulates three implementations of the *Ihya Ulumuddin* concept as a solution to restore the dignity of education in the midst of industrial hegemony. First, the reorientation of the intention to study into pure worship to seek the pleasure of Allah so that the value of books is holy again. Second, the integration of epistemology that eliminates the dichotomy of religion and general science positions industrial skills as the worship of muamawar. Third, the cultivation of manners before knowledge, so that the work ethic of factories and academics is equally glorified in halal principles. This concept offers spiritual balance for the people of Tegal. Education is no longer seen as a burden of costs, but an investment in the hereafter. This implementation requires a Ghazalian value curriculum so that graduates have mental-spiritual resilience. As a result, the paradox of uniformity versus books is resolved because both are seen as equal fields of jihad. This solution is essential to prevent moral degradation due to narrow materialism and ensure that economic development goes hand in hand with dignified spiritual progress.

The concept of *Ihya Ulumuddin* offers a fundamental solution through the reorientation of intentions so that learning and work activities are not trapped in materialistic pragmatism, but are seen as transcendental worship. Informant S emphasized the importance of straightening the intention so that knowledge brings real benefits and brings us closer to the Creator. The analysis shows that without a spiritual foundation, humans in industrial areas risk becoming "worker robots" that lose their existential direction. OM2's advice supports this by emphasizing that seeking money must be accompanied by the intention of worship so as not to become a slave to money. For him, both with factory uniforms and with lecture books, both are worth the prize if done honestly. Reviving knowledge does not mean ignoring the economy, but rather giving a spiritual dimension to the activity. This solution eliminates the worker's feelings of inferiority and gives students peace of mind because glory is measured by sincerity of intention, not physical attributes.

Islamic education from the perspective of Al-Ghazali emphasizes the integration of manners and character so that the individual is not only a means of production of the company. Informant S highlighted that in industrial competition, moral integrity and honesty are the main distinguishing factors. The analysis concluded that strengthening spiritual resilience is a solution to the crisis of students' self-confidence, so that they are not indifferent to the financial independence of factory workers. The quality of a true human being is determined by moral depth, not material accumulation. OM1's moral message affirms that being a "right" and honest person is more important than just being smart about making money with corrupt morals. True knowledge is knowledge that gives peace of mind and leads to truth. Reviving science means restoring human

dignity as a moral subject, so that the ideal of education to improve the quality of oneself still has an honorable place in the midst of a materialistic industrial society.

Concept *Ihya Ulumuddin* offers the elimination of the sharp dichotomy between religious and secular sciences as well as physical and intellectual work. Informant S motivates the younger generation to stay focused on self-development patiently without feeling socially left behind. The analysis shows that every halal profession, both factory workers and academics, is a service line if carried out with the right intention and qualified expertise. This is validated by OP's hope that he wants his son to succeed in the afterlife. For him, it is okay to be a worker or a scholar as long as it is beneficial to others and does not forget worship. The dignity of Islamic education leads the public to see factory uniforms and lecture books as two equally noble implementers before God. By removing the rigid barrier between academia and industry, society no longer demeans either of them because both are seen as equal charitable fields for the benefit of the people.

Changing the paradigm from just looking for money to seeking blessings (*barakah*) is the key to restoring the dignity of education in the midst of the flow of industrialization. Informant S emphasized that knowledge from universities must be transformed into real benefits for society. Sociological-spiritual analysis concludes that parents in industrial areas will return to appreciating the academic path if it is proven to produce civilized and devoted children. P1 gives the philosophical statement that money can run out, but the blessings of knowledge and devotion of children will lead to a peaceful life. He valued smart children who understood manners better than arrogant rich children. In conclusion, Al-Ghazali's solution regarding character education based on soul cleansing is able to melt the extreme pragmatism of parents. If educational institutions prove that textbooks give birth to human beings who bring peace to the family, then education will be glorified again as a means of saving eternal dignity.

In conclusion, the integration of *the concept of Ihya Ulumuddin* serves as a spiritual fortress for the Tegal industrial community to avoid identity crises and destructive materialism. Informant S advised optimism so that the younger generation does not give up, continues to develop skills, and has transcendental life goals. The final analysis concludes that restoring the dignity of education means making science a way to revive the heart in the midst of a saturated industrialization routine. The OM2 living principle reminds us that the world is just a stopover, so humans should not be uniformed servants or money servants. The main thing is how science and work become the light of the heart and provision after death. Islamic education ensures that economic progress goes hand in hand with the glory of good manners. The phenomenon of the "Tegal Laka-Laka Paradox" is finally seen not as a conflict, but as a space to mature the meaning of life as a human being that is beneficial to religion, nation, and family.

Discussion

This study proves that people's preference for factory uniforms over textbooks is a rational survival strategy, not a sign of intellectual decline. In the midst of structural economic pressure and the saturation of the undergraduate job market, there has been a shift in the meaning of education from the ideals of character formation to instant pragmatism as an administrative ticket for daily wage seekers. This crisis is actually a teleological crisis in which the spiritual value of science is eroded by the hegemony of massive industrial materialism (Ismiatun et al., 2024; Mogas et al., 2022; Rifdillah, 2025). These findings confirm that without a profound reinterpretation, education will only produce physically productive "robot workers" but lose their human souls. Therefore, value intervention is needed to balance worldly and ukhrawi needs in harmony in the midst of the ferocity of modern industrialization that often ignores the human aspect for material gain.

Using the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's Capital Theory, this phenomenon reflects the contestation of instant economic capital against long-term cultural capital in the pragmatic social sphere

(Ma'arif et al., 2025; Ma'mun et al., 2025; Supriyanto et al., 2025). The daily wage of the factory provides a certainty of economic capital that is more valuable than higher education investments, the conversion of which is considered abstract and high-risk today. The factory uniform ultimately serves as a symbolic capital that signifies financial independence, while student status is considered a burden of dependency in the habitus of urban industrial society (Bourdieu, 1990, 2011). This research enriches the Bourdieu framework by introducing "spiritual-religious capital" as a balancing mechanism capable of reconfiguring the traditional hierarchy of capital (Fashri, 2014). This intervention of transcendental values allows for the creation of a new habitus that integrates material needs with spiritual meaning holistically, proving that the religious dimension is essential in understanding the dynamics of an industrial society that still adheres to Divine values (Abidin et al., 2025; Adiyono et al., 2025; Andriana et al., 2025; Arizona et al., 2025; Aziz et al., 2024).

This research substantively supports previous studies (Suryadarma, Ardhana, Beta, Kurniawan, Aprilianty) which confirm that structural economic pressures and *Mismatch* skills trigger the devaluation of education, where people tend to choose instant work for survival (Nuryatno, 2011). However, this research is different because it is not only fixated on quantitative analysis, but also offers normative resolutions based on local and religious wisdom (Sonia, 2022). The main focus of the research lies in the psychosocial dimension and the construction of the subjective meaning of actors that are often overlooked in macro statistics (Zainuddin, 2008). Novelty (*novelty*) offered is the integration of the concept *Ihya Ulumuddin* as a framework for solutions to reconstruct the meaning of education in the midst of massive industrialization. This spiritual intervention model aims to change people's habitus from a pragmatic-materialistic mindset to a holistic-spiritual one (Simamora, 2025). With a theological-sociological approach, this research succeeds in bridging the gap between urgent economic needs and long-term educational ideals through concrete Islamic values (Hakim & Salim, 2024; Hidayatullah, 2024; Ismawati, 2023; Munawaroh, 2025; Tsani & Ali, 2024).

Substantively, this study supports the findings of previous research on the impact of economic pressures and skills mismatches on the devaluation of education in developing countries. However, the novelty of this research lies in its refusal to stop at structural-quantitative analysis that is external and macro in nature. If previous research tended to be diagnostic without offering internal solutions, this study goes further by providing a model of spiritual intervention to reconstruct the eroded meaning of education through the deepening of the psychosocial dimension of the actors (Adiyani et al., 2025; Aulia et al., 2025; Husni et al., 2026). The integration of Islamic values fills the gap in previous research by providing normative resolutions that are able to change people's habits from pragmatic-materialistic to holistic-spiritual (Mulyasa, 2014). Thus, this study not only validates previous empirical facts, but also enriches the literature on the sociology of education by offering concrete solutions relevant to the religious industrial community in Indonesia for the sustainability of a dignified civilization.

An urgent strategic step is to reformulate a more holistic education and employment policy through affirmative policies that integrate a spiritual work ethic into the vocational curriculum. Educational institutions must eliminate the dichotomy of science by inserting the values of manners and professional ethics based on local wisdom so that internships or work in factories are not only seen as exploitation, but as a dignified field of learning. In addition, providing incentives for companies that support continuous education for their workers is very important so that factory uniforms and textbooks can run synergistically as a full human resource investment. This intervention is essential for building a social ecosystem where economic development goes hand in hand with spiritual progress (Arbi et al., 2025; Sarpini, 2025). Thus, the young generation is no longer trapped in a binary choice between survival and the pursuit of knowledge, but is able to

integrate the two to contribute to a nobler civilization of the nation in accordance with the vision of a Golden Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

The study presents a surprising conclusion: the choice of urban people to wear factory uniforms rather than hold a college textbook is not a sign of intellectual regression or structural stupidity, but rather a rational "silent rebellion" against an economic system that fails to promise a definite future. Even more surprising is the finding that this education crisis is not just an economic crisis, but a spiritual crisis hidden behind the unemployment rate and labor statistics. The solution does not lie in the addition of jobs or financial assistance alone, but in the revolution of meaning through the concept of *Ihya Ulumuddin* which equates the degree of menial and academic work as an equal field of jihad in the eyes of God. This slaps hard the common assumption that industrialization must sacrifice the sanctity of science for the sake of production efficiency. Without this transcendental intervention, we are actually printing a generation of robots that are physically productive but spiritually and emotionally dead. The current education policy turns out to be too narrow because it only pursues technical competence without touching the depths of the human soul. This conclusion forces us to recognize that saving education can not only be done with a large budget, but must also be done by reviving the spirit of science that has been lost from the hegemony of materialism. Otherwise, we will lose all of our humanity for the sake of pseudo-economic growth and unsustainable growth. It is a stark reminder that the future of the nation is not determined by how many factories are standing, but by how strong the spiritual meaning that sustains every sweat expended, both on the college and on the production floor, to restore the dignity of humanity once mortgaged by the narrow pragmatism that is slowly but surely destroying our social order for the future generations who will inherit this nation.

The fundamental weakness of this study lies in the locus that it is only limited to industrial urban areas in Indonesia, so that the findings regarding the paradox of factory uniformity versus textbooks cannot be generalized widely to rural or agrarian areas that have different sociological-economic dynamics. The exclusive focus on urban contexts creates structural biases because cost-of-living pressures, industrial access, and urban social stratification do not represent Indonesia's geographically and culturally diverse national reality. Rural societies can interpret education through a different lens, where kinship factors, local traditions, and subsistence economics play a more dominant role than capitalist industrial logic. In addition, this study has not captured regional variations such as differences in regional policies, work culture, and inter-island access to education that can moderate this paradoxical phenomenon. To overcome these limitations, future researchers need to conduct cross-regional comparative studies that compare urban, peri-urban, and rural dynamics to map the variation in patterns of educational meaning more comprehensively. A multi-location approach in different provinces with diverse economic characteristics will strengthen the external validity of the findings and allow the identification of contextual factors that are specific local versus universal. In addition, longitudinal research is needed to track shifts in educational values as economic structures and government policies change over time. The integration of mixed methods with national-scale surveys can complement the depth of qualitative data with representative macro patterns. Finally, testing the concept of *Ihya Ulumuddin* in the context of non-Javanese cultures or different religious communities is important to ensure the relevance of the spiritual solutions offered in an inclusive manner for the diversity of Indonesian society, so that the resulting policy recommendations are truly holistic, equitable, and applicable nationally for the restoration of the dignity of education as a whole.

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