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The Trilogy of the Gontor Boarding School Ethos: The Transformation of K.H. Imam Zarkasyi's Thought within the Landscape of Modern Islamic Educational Philosophyn

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Kata Kunci:

Trilogi Jiwa; K.H. Imam Zarkasyi; Pondok Modern Gontor; Pesantren Transformation; Educational Philosophy; Islamic Education Modernization; Digital Era Education.

Abstract

This study examines the transformation of K.H. Imam Zarkasyi's educational thought through the concept of Trilogi Jiwa (sincerity, simplicity, and self-reliance) as the philosophical foundation of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor within the landscape of modern Islamic education in Indonesia. Employing a qualitative philosophical analysis approach, this research uncovers the epistemological, ontological, and axiological foundations underpinning K.H. Imam Zarkasyi's educational philosophy. Findings reveal that Trilogi Jiwa represents a unique synthesis between classical pesantren tradition and educational modernity, subsequently evolving into Panca Jiwa as a comprehensive value system addressing 21st-century educational challenges). The transformation manifests in an integrated curriculum structure harmonizing intellectual, spiritual, and social dimensions, creating a prototype of modern Islamic education capable of responding to digitalization and globalization while preserving Islamic identity. From an educational philosophy perspective, K.H. Imam Zarkasyi's Trilogi Jiwa demonstrates convergence with idealism, reconstructionism, progressivism, and humanistic philosophy. This study contributes to contemporary discourse on Islamic education modernization by offering an indigenous Indonesian framework that bridges tradition and modernity, with implications for pesantren transformation in the digital era.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji transformasi pemikiran pendidikan K.H. Imam Zarkasyi melalui konsep Trilogi Jiwa (keikhlasan, kesederhanaan, dan kemandirian) sebagai landasan filosofis Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor dalam lanskap pendidikan Islam modern di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan analisis filosofis kualitatif, penelitian ini mengungkap landasan epistemologis, ontologis, dan aksiologis yang mendasari filsafat pendidikan K.H. Imam Zarkasyi. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa Trilogi Jiwa merupakan sintesis unik antara tradisi pesantren klasik dan modernitas pendidikan, yang kemudian berkembang menjadi Panca Jiwa sebagai sistem nilai komprehensif yang menjawab tantangan pendidikan abad ke-21). Transformasi tersebut

terwujud dalam struktur kurikulum terpadu yang menyelaraskan dimensi intelektual, spiritual, dan sosial, menciptakan prototipe pendidikan Islam modern yang mampu menanggapi digitalisasi dan globalisasi sambil mempertahankan identitas Islam. Dari perspektif filsafat pendidikan, Trilogi Jiwa K.H. Imam Zarkasyi menunjukkan konvergensi dengan idealisme, rekonstruksionisme, progresivisme, dan filsafat humanistik. Studi ini berkontribusi pada wacana kontemporer tentang modernisasi pendidikan Islam dengan menawarkan kerangka kerja asli Indonesia yang menjembatani tradisi dan modernitas, dengan implikasi bagi transformasi pesantren di era digital.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian Islamic education underwent significant transformation in the 20th century through various reform movements that bridged pesantren tradition with modernity demands (Azra, 2015; Steenbrink, 2019; Asyiah et al., 2025). Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor emerged as an innovative model successfully synthesizing traditional Islamic values with modern educational systems through the visionary leadership of K.H. Imam Zarkasyi (1910-1985) alongside K.H. Ahmad Sahal and K.H. Zainuddin Fananie (Zarkasyi, 2020; Bahij, 2024).

K.H. Imam Zarkasyi developed Trilogi Jiwa sincerity (ikhlas), simplicity (kesederhanaan), and self-reliance (kemandirian) as the philosophical foundation distinguishing Gontor from traditional pesantren and other modern educational institutions (Zarkasyi, 2005; Hajar et al., 2025). This concept subsequently evolved into Panca Jiwa with the addition of Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah) and freedom (jiwa bebas) (Daulay, 2016), transforming pesantren institutional structures and establishing a new paradigm in Indonesian Islamic educational philosophy.

Although research on K.H. Imam Zarkasyi's thought has been conducted focusing on historical aspects and practical implementation (Mastuki & El-Saha, 2017; Dhofier, 2015), in-depth studies on the philosophical dimensions of Trilogi Jiwa within the context of modern Islamic educational philosophy remain limited. This philosophical understanding is crucial for uncovering the epistemological, ontological, and axiological foundations that form the basis of K.H. Imam Zarkasyi's thought transformation and its relevance to contemporary educational philosophy schools (Nata, 2018; Mardatillah et al., 2025). Moreover, in the context of digital era challenges and educational transformation demands toward Society

5.0, understanding the philosophical foundations of Trilogi Jiwa becomes increasingly important for developing relevant yet identity-preserving Islamic education models (Syafaruddin, 2024; Anjaludin & Pratama, 2025.)

RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative research employs philosophical-historical approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2014). Primary data include K.H. Imam Zarkasyi's works, Gontor documents, and interviews with caregivers/senior ustadz/alumni. Secondary data encompass literature on K.H. Imam Zarkasyi's thought, Islamic and modern educational philosophy, and pesantren transformation studies.

Data collection through: documentation study (Bowen, 2009), in-depth semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), and participatory observation (Spradley, 1980). Analysis uses content analysis and philosophical analysis (Krippendorff, 2004): data reduction, categorization, philosophical interpretation, theoretical comparison, and synthesis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Creswell, 2014).

Data validity ensured through source and method triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 2002), member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and peer debriefing (Creswell, 2014)..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1 Philosophical Foundations of Trilogi Jiwa

Ontological Dimension: K.H. Imam Zarkasyi viewed humans as having three dimensions: spiritual (ruhani), intellectual (aqlani), and social (ijtima'i) (Zarkasyi, 1998; Zarkasyi, 2020). The spiritual dimension as fundamental aspect is manifested in sincerity as education's ruh, aligned with fitrah and ihsan concepts (Al-Attas, 1980; Muslim, 1955). The intellectual dimension rejects religious-secular knowledge dichotomy, developing "knowledge unity" as Divine truth manifestation, similar to Al-Faruqi's unity of knowledge (1982) and Al-Attas's integrated knowledge (1980) (Asyibli et al., 2025). Intellectual independence encourages ijtihad within shari'ah corridor. The social dimension emphasizes ukhuwah Islamiyah as harmony basis, with simplicity eliminating artificial socio-economic status barriers, creating real egalitarianism (Mastuki & El-Saha, 2017; Hajar et al., 2025).

Epistemological Dimension: Integrates three sources: revelation (Qur'an and hadith as

fundamental guidance), reason (instrument for understanding revelation and exploring nature), and experience (learning by doing) (Langgulung, 1988; Wan Daud, 1998). All three are complementary, mutually reinforcing in truth seeking (Nata, 2018; Mardatillah et al., 2025). Sincerity means intellectual honesty, simplicity means extracting knowledge essence, independence means thinking independently without blind taqlid.

Axiological Dimension: Emphasizing character formation as highest goal (Zarkasyi, 1998). Vertical goal (*hablum minallah*) forms pious humans with consistent sincerity. Horizontal goal (*hablum minannas*) forms beneficial humans with social care. Fundamental values include *tawhid* (foundation of all values), sincerity (purity of intention), humility, *istiqamah* (consistency), brotherhood, and responsible freedom. Goal hierarchy: ultimate (Allah's pleasure), intermediate (balanced *insan kamil*), operational ("High Morality, Healthy Body, Broad Knowledge, Free Thinking") (Al-Attas, 1980; Zarkasyi, 1998; Almuzani et al., 2021).

4.2 Transformation to Panca Jiwa

Historical Context: Transformation through long reflection and evaluation, driven by internal factors (explicating implicit values, heterogeneous community experience, strengthening identity) and external factors (character education discourse, modernity challenges, pluralism-globalism-nationalism issues, digital transformation demands) (Daulay, 2016; Zarkasyi, 2005; Syafaruddin, 2024).

Integration Dynamics: Five souls create holistic system mutually reinforcing: sincerity-brotherhood creates authentic brotherhood; simplicity-brotherhood eliminates socio-economic barriers; independence-freedom mutually prerequisite; sincerity-freedom purifies motivation into responsible freedom. In digital era, this integration includes digital literacy and technology mastery for positive purposes (Anjaludin & Pratama, 2025).

4.3 Relevance to Educational Philosophy

Idealism Convergence: Convergence in spiritual value primacy (sincerity as foundation), character education as main goal, learning through exemplary (*uswah hasanah*), and absolute truth seeking based on *tawhid* (Gutek, 2011; Ozmon & Craver, 2008). Relevant for establishing moral foundations in secular education.

Reconstructionism Affinity: Education as change agent (producing reformer leaders), critical independence (critical consciousness), education for social justice (simplicity and

brotherhood), and curriculum based on contemporary social problems (Brameld, 1956; Counts, 1932; Freire, 1970). Aligned with sustainable development and social transformation goals in digital era.

Progressivism Alignment: Learning by doing (independence through khidmah and OPPM), student-centered learning (self-governing empowers santri), education as growth process (emphasizing process not results), and flexible curriculum (elective programs and talent development) (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Kilpatrick, 1918). Applicable in project-based learning and experiential education.

Humanistic Resonance: Self-actualization (independence toward insan kamil), holistic education (spiritual-intellectual-social dimensions), freedom and responsibility (free soul within Islamic framework), value-based education (sincerity provides transcendental meaning), and person-centered approach (brotherhood and simplicity create conducive climate) (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1969; Noddings, 2003; Frankl, 1946). Relevant for developing complete human potential in digital era (Syafaruddin, 2024).

4.4 Implementation in Educational System

Integrated Curriculum Structure: Formal curriculum integrates religious sciences (Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh, etc.) and general sciences (Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, etc.) in balanced proportion, reflecting knowledge dichotomy rejection (Zarkasyi, 1998; Daulay, 2016). Hidden curriculum transmits Trilogi Jiwa through simple dormitory life, khidmah system, self-governing, and communal life (Mastuki & El-Saha, 2017). Extracurricular curriculum develops talents through organizations (OPPM), sports, arts, language (muhadharah in three languages), and journalism (Sujatno, 2015). In digital era, curriculum integrates digital literacy and technology for positive purposes (Anjaludin & Pratama, 2025).

Innovative Learning Methods: Direct method for languages (direct practice), total dormitory system (immersion environment), khidmah (unpaid service learning), personal mentoring system, and real project-based learning (Zarkasyi, 1998; Daulay, 2016). Technology integration for enhanced learning effectiveness while maintaining core values (Syafaruddin, 2024).

Transformative Educational Culture: Sincerity culture (teachers without fixed salary, no excessive ranking, appreciation for process and intention), simplicity culture (luxury item prohibition, equal uniforms and facilities, simple healthy lifestyle, substance emphasis),

independence culture (santri self-managing, self-governing, no parental intervention), brotherhood culture (senior-junior system, joint activities, no discrimination), freedom culture (open debate, respecting differences, no political/group affiliation, independent critical thinking) (Zarkasyi, 1998; Daulay, 2016; Hajar et al., 2025).

4.5 Implications of K.H. Imam Zarkasyi's Thought

Theoretical Implications: Harmonious tradition-modernity synthesis, refuting their assumed contradiction; epistemological decolonization through knowledge dichotomy rejection and knowledge unity, aligned with Al-Faruqi yet more pragmatic; comprehensive operational character education model, not superficial; empowerment education within Islamic framework, aligned with Freire; indigenous educational philosophy offering balanced alternative between tradition preservation and modern demands (Azra, 2019; Nata, 2018; Mardatillah et al., 2025).

Practical Implications: Successful modern pesantren prototype replicated by hundreds of institutions; productive waqf model ensuring economic independence; producing competent integrity-based human resources dispersed across sectors; IKPM as valuable social capital connecting global alumni (Zarkasyi, 2005; Sujatno, 2015; Bahij, 2024).

Critique and Challenges: Theoretical: sincerity-professionalism tension, complexity simplification, freedom-authority balance. Practical: globalization and digital technology, certification standardization demands, santri diversity, leadership sustainability, digital transformation while preserving identity (Azra, 2019; Dhofier, 2015; Syafaruddin, 2024; Anjaludin & Pratama, 2025).

4.6 Contemporary Relevance

Trilogi Jiwa remains relevant for: responding to Indonesia's character crisis (sincerity vs corruption, simplicity vs consumerism, independence vs dependency); sustainable development (simplicity and independence through local resources); peace and tolerance education (inclusive brotherhood and anti-fanaticism free soul in polarization era); entrepreneurship education in digital creative economy era; preparing humans for Society 5.0 balancing technology with humanistic values (Megawangi, 2004; UNESCO, 2014; Syafaruddin, 2024; Choeroni & Anwar, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Trilogi Jiwa possesses solid philosophical foundation integrating ontological (spiritual-intellectual-social human), epistemological (revelation-reason-experience), and axiological (balanced insan kamil) dimensions, representing creative synthesis of classical Islamic tradition with modern thought. Evolution to Panca Jiwa demonstrates K.H. Imam Zarkasyi's responsive dynamism, forming comprehensive mutually reinforcing value system creating holistic educational ecosystem relevant to digital era and Society 5.0 challenges.

Trilogi Jiwa converges with idealism (spiritual primacy, character education), reconstructionism (social change agency), progressivism (learning by doing, student-centered), and humanism (self-actualization, holistic education), showing interconnection with global educational philosophy discourse while offering indigenous Indonesian perspective.

Comprehensive implementation in integrated curriculum (formal-hidden-extracurricular), innovative methods, and transformative culture creates conducive environment for santri character formation, adaptable to digital transformation while preserving core identity.

Significant contribution to modern Indonesian Islamic education: tradition-modernity synthesis, epistemological decolonization, operational character education, becoming inspirational prototype for hundreds of institutions. In digital era and Society 5.0, Trilogi Jiwa offers relevant framework balancing technological advancement with spiritual-moral values, providing alternative model for global Islamic education facing modernization-identity challenges.

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