



Ashabiyyah and Poverty Alleviation: Insights from Minang, Aceh, and Batak Communities in North Sumatra

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Abstract

This research explores multiple dimensions of poverty, highlighting key contributing factors such as economic conditions, inadequate wages, demographic influences, and limited market opportunities. A central finding reveals how Acehnese communities address poverty by developing micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as productive economic units. Cultural approaches play a significant role, with different ethnic groups in Indonesia adopting distinct strategies: the Acehnese emphasize family-based support, the Minang prioritize cooperation, and Batak communities value wealth, lineage, and honor. The study underscores the importance of collaborative efforts between the government, society, and family networks in poverty alleviation, placing particular emphasis on familial economic support and mutual assistance.

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Introduction

Islam is a religion that promotes a just and prosperous society through the practice of social responsibility, rather than selfishness or individualism. Social life, in the Islamic perspective, begins with the nuclear family and extends to the wider family network. According to Islamic teachings, all family members—both immediate and extended—are obliged to support and protect one another, creating a strong and resilient family unit based on mutual assistance. A strong family is one where members uphold each other, refrain from harmful competition, and avoid jealousy or envy. For such a structure to function effectively, there must be a recognized leader within the family, supported by cooperative members.

The principle of supporting close family members is emphasized in both the Qur'an and Hadith and is an essential obligation for every Muslim. In Indonesia, three ethnic communities—Acehnese, Minangkabau (Minang), and Mandailing—deeply integrate Islamic teachings into their cultural practices. Among these communities, the Islamic imperative to

assist family members facing economic hardship is clearly observed. Wealthier relatives help, protection, and care to those in need, embodying the spirit of solidarity taught in Islam.

The Islamic practices embraced by the Acehnese, Minang, and Mandailing people are particularly effective in addressing family welfare and broader social issues. If Islamic teachings were followed earnestly and comprehensively, it is conceivable that no member of a village would remain in poverty, as family members would ensure mutual support and protection.

Poverty is one of the most pressing social challenges that must be addressed to achieve societal prosperity. It is not confined to any single region or nation—it is a global concern. Even developed countries like the United States face poverty-related issues (Syafrina et al., 2023). Therefore, poverty must be addressed universally, as it often leads to other complex social problems. Within this context, the role of the family is crucial in poverty alleviation.

Poverty cannot be eradicated by government efforts alone; community involvement is essential. The issue of poverty extends beyond economics and intersects with broader social concerns. As noted by Putri Anita Rahman, the Indonesian government has implemented various strategies—both top-down and bottom-up—to combat poverty. Effective poverty reduction thus requires cooperation between the government and the wider community (Rahman, 2020).

Involving family and community members is a strategic approach to alleviating poverty. Al-Qaradhwī refers to this as the "ashabiyyah theory," which emphasizes the empowerment of economically stable family members to support those who are less fortunate. This can be achieved through education, guidance, infaq (voluntary charity), zakat (obligatory almsgiving), waqf (endowment), and other forms of assistance. Wealthy or established family members can contribute by meeting basic needs through charitable giving, and by providing business capital and life skills training to help their relatives become self-sufficient. This includes support for entrepreneurship, such as capital for sales, factory operations, or marketing initiatives, as well as practical skills in sales, employment, and financial management.

Ultimately, poverty is not only a governmental concern but a shared responsibility between the state and society. In Islamic thought, the primary responsibility for supporting the poor lies with their own families. Therefore, empowering family networks to play an active role in poverty eradication is a fundamental concept within Islam.

Literature Review

Asabiyyah is a concept that spans multiple disciplines, including sociology, hadith studies, and economics. In sociology, asabiyyah is used to strengthen relationships between individuals and between groups. It is commonly interpreted as *social solidarity*, a sense of unity among people connected by blood ties, shared identity, or other forms of social bonds, all working toward a common goal. In this sense, asabiyyah represents kinship ties and communal support, where individuals assist one another to achieve collective aims—such as building a strong society or state. Group members are often willing to sacrifice personal interests for the benefit of the collective, which reinforces unity and contributes to the realization of a cohesive, powerful community (Hanna, 2017). One notable Muslim thinker who employed the concept of asabiyyah for political and social analysis was Ibn Khaldun. According to him, the formation of a strong state is intrinsically linked to asabiyyah. This sense of solidarity typically originates from blood relations, fostering a natural affection and shared sense of destiny among kin. This familial bond nurtures cooperation and mutual support, especially during times of hardship. Those who share asabiyyah formulate shared objectives and cultivate a sense of unity (*al-ittihad wal iltihām*).

Over time, asabiyyah can transcend blood ties. When people settle and live in the same area, asabiyyah based on lineage may evolve into *regional asabiyyah*. These local units of solidarity can merge, forming a larger collective asabiyyah that lays the foundation for statehood. Thus, the convergence of several small asabiyyah groups in one region creates a more extensive and powerful unity. Ibn Khaldun emphasized that lineage-based asabiyyah produces physical strength and political cohesion. However, physical strength alone is insufficient without a unifying force. This is where religion plays a critical role—as the glue that binds various asabiyyah together. For Ibn Khaldun, a state (*daulah*) becomes strong through religious unity. Power (*al-mulk*) is achieved through superiority, and superiority, in turn, is built upon unified asabiyyah committed to a common goal—namely, the upholding of God's religion (Hanna, 2017). A good Muslim, therefore, is one who actively helps his brothers, brings them happiness, eases their burdens, pays off their debts, and protects them from hunger. Such individuals are the most beneficial to others, and Allah SWT loves them dearly.

There are many factors that can lead a family into poverty. One common cause is physical or mental disability, which can prevent individuals from earning a livelihood and supporting their families. In such cases, it becomes a moral and religious obligation for other Muslims to help. Islamic teachings provide many examples of this ethos of support. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, for example, recounts a story involving Ibrahim bin Adham and a fellow Sufi named Al-Balkhi, who misunderstood Islamic teachings on sustenance and reliance on God. Al-Balkhi had set out on a trading journey but returned shortly thereafter. When asked by Ibrahim bin Adham why he came back so soon, Al-Balkhi explained that he had witnessed something extraordinary. While resting in an old, broken building, he observed a lame and blind bird that could not fly or feed itself. Surprisingly, another bird came and regularly brought food to the disabled bird.

Reflecting on this, Al-Balkhi concluded that if a healthy bird could care for its disabled counterpart, surely God would also provide for him without his needing to work. Hence, he abandoned his trading plans. Upon hearing this, Ibrahim bin Adham rebuked him, saying: "*It is strange what you have done, my brother. Why would you choose to be like the blind and lame bird who waits for help, rather than be like the healthy bird who provides for others? Do you not know that the upper hand is better than the lower hand?*"

This story illustrates a key Islamic principle: it is more virtuous to be the one who gives than the one who receives. The most effective way to help poor or struggling families, especially those with disabled members, is to provide for their basic needs—food, clothing, shelter—and, when possible, empower them through economic support. Thus, asabiyyah not only plays a role in political and social cohesion but also serves as a practical model for community-based poverty alleviation. The responsibility to care for the poor, especially within one's family or community, lies not only with the state but also with individuals—particularly those who are more fortunate. Islam encourages this active solidarity as a fundamental element of a just and compassionate society.

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) established a strong bond of brotherhood between the *Muhajirin* (migrants) and the *Ansar* (residents of Medina) when the *Muhajirin* migrated to Medina. A notable example of this brotherhood is the relationship between Abdurrahman bin Auf and Sa'ad bin Rabi'. Sa'ad offered Abdurrahman two large gardens as a form of support, but Abdurrahman politely declined and instead requested to be shown the marketplace so he could start his own business (Anwar et al., 2019). This story offers a powerful lesson: Sa'ad bin Rabi' sought to help his brother, who had temporarily fallen into poverty due to migration, by offering business capital. Although Abdurrahman declined the gift, the act illustrates one effective way to help someone out of poverty—by providing the means for economic independence through capital investment.

In this context, personnel management becomes relevant. It involves planning, directing, organizing, monitoring, hiring, rewarding, integrating, maintaining, developing, and, when

necessary, terminating human resources to achieve individual, group, and societal goals (Handoko, T. Hani, 2014, as cited in Rahmah & Batubara, 2023). It is important to recognize that poverty is not a uniform condition; it varies according to situation and context. Experts have identified four typologies of poverty: 1) *Material poverty* – This type involves the inability to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education, and healthcare. It often affects elderly individuals (around 60 years old) who are no longer economically productive, though they may still engage in spiritual practices; 2) *Absolute poverty* – This form affects people who are still in their productive years but whose incomes are insufficient to meet both material and spiritual needs. They may struggle to find time or energy for religious practices due to long working hours or physically demanding jobs; 3) *Spiritual poverty* – In this case, individuals may be materially well-off but are unable to fulfill their spiritual needs, such as engaging in religious obligations or voluntary worship; 4) *Prosperity* – A prosperous society is one in which individuals are able to fulfill both material and spiritual needs (Aryani, 2019).

Numerous scholars and experts—both from government institutions and the Muslim intellectual community—have proposed a variety of poverty alleviation strategies. These strategies are often based on their experiences, observations, and theoretical reflections. While each approach may be valid and beneficial in its own context, the key consideration is determining which concepts are most effective and applicable in specific communities. This requires thoughtful analysis and adaptation to local conditions. According to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the primary ways to combat poverty is through hard work. He outlines three essential strategies for poverty eradication: 1) Encouraging individuals to work; 2) Seeking assistance from family and relatives, and 3) Empowering zakat (obligatory almsgiving). These strategies are rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith and serve as guiding principles for the Muslim community. Al-Qaradawi also identifies unemployment as a major cause of poverty. A lack of employment prevents individuals from producing income, thereby increasing poverty levels. Research has shown that unemployment significantly contributes to poverty in society; when unemployment rises in each area, the poverty rate tends to rise accordingly (Rizal & Mukaromah, 2021).

Methodology

This research employs a mixed methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The design used is *sequential explanatory*, in which the collection and analysis of quantitative data are conducted first, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data to strengthen, and elaborate on the quantitative findings. Primary data sources include questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The research involves three community groups—traders, employees/staff, and community leaders—from the Acehnese, Minangkabau, and Batak ethnic communities in the city of Medan. The research instruments and observational tools are carefully designed to ensure that questions are both relevant and easily understood by the informants. The main instrument used is a questionnaire distributed to heads of households from the selected ethnic groups. A Likert scale is utilized to facilitate easier responses from participants. Data collection was carried out online using platforms such as Google Forms. The quantitative data is analyzed using statistical methods, while the qualitative data is examined using phenomenological analysis techniques. The structural model employed in this research is reflective, and the reliability of the qualitative data is tested using the Kappa test in NVivo (Sugiyono, 2011; Ghozali, 2015).

Research Design

The primary aim of this research is to describe and analyze the application of the theory and concept of *ashabiyyah* in poverty alleviation among the Acehnese, Minangkabau, and Batak communities in Medan City. To achieve this objective, the study employs a mixed methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This approach was chosen to allow for more comprehensive and valid data collection, as well as to provide a deeper understanding of complex social phenomena from multiple perspectives.

The research design follows a sequential explanatory model, where quantitative data collection and analysis are conducted first, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. This allows the quantitative findings to be further elaborated and deepened through qualitative insights, providing a more nuanced understanding of poverty alleviation within different cultural contexts. According to Sugiyono (2011), mixed methods research is an effective strategy to produce valid and reliable data by combining numerical data with descriptive narratives.

Participants, Sample Selection, and Data Sources

The participants in this study are drawn from three ethnic groups—Acehnese, Minangkabau, and Batak—residing in Medan City. These groups were selected due to their distinct cultural backgrounds and their significant contribution to the city's socio-economic landscape. A purposive sampling method was employed, targeting individuals with relevant experience and knowledge concerning poverty alleviation, particularly in the context of *ashabiyyah*. Data collection involved both online questionnaires (e.g., via Google Forms) and direct interviews with selected key informants. The study collected both quantitative and qualitative data: quantitative data through closed-ended questionnaire items using a Likert scale, and qualitative data through in-depth interviews and field observations. The data sources include primary data that collected directly through questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Meanwhile secondary data that drawn from scholarly literature such as books, journal articles, and official documents related to *ashabiyyah* and poverty alleviation.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The research utilized two primary instruments are a questionnaire designed to collect quantitative data using Likert-scale questions to measure respondents' perceptions and attitudes toward poverty alleviation based on the *ashabiyyah* concept. An interview guide developed to collect qualitative data through structured and semi-structured interviews. Both instruments were developed based on a literature review and refined with input from the research supervisor. The questionnaire was designed to be easily understood and aligned with the research objectives.

Procedural Steps for Data Collection starts from: 1) Preparation: A pilot test was conducted to assess the clarity and relevance of the questionnaire items; 2) Questionnaire Distribution: The questionnaire was distributed both online (via Google Forms) and in person to heads of households from the selected ethnic groups in Medan; 3) Interviews: Face-to-face interviews were conducted with key informants selected based on specific criteria (e.g., experience in poverty alleviation). Interviews were recorded with the participants' consent; 4) Observation: Field observations were carried out to better understand the local socio-economic conditions and community dynamics. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods, while qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. According to Sugiyono (2017), Likert scales are effective for capturing measurable attitudes from respondents.

Procedural Steps in Data Analysis

Once collected, all data were organized and cleaned to remove incomplete or invalid responses. Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS or SmartPLS, applying validity testing Reliability testing (e.g., Cronbach's Alpha) Descriptive analysis Inferential analysis (e.g., hypothesis testing). Qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo software to facilitate coding and theme identification. Thematic analysis was conducted to uncover recurring patterns and insights from the interviews. The integration of both data types provided a well-rounded perspective on the research problem.

Ensuring Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the instruments, factor analysis was used to verify whether questionnaire items accurately measure the intended constructs. Convergent validity was assessed through factor loading values and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable. For qualitative data, Kappa reliability testing was used to ensure consistency between coders. Additionally, triangulation was employed to cross-verify findings across questionnaires, interviews, and observations, thereby enhancing the overall credibility of the results.

Measuring Variables in the Research

Each variable was operationally defined to ensure clear and consistent measurement. For instance, the variable *ashabiyyah* was measured using indicators such as solidarity, loyalty, and commitment to family values. These were evaluated using a Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The relationships between variables were analyzed through regression analysis or path analysis, depending on the hypothesis being tested. All methods of measurement, validation, and reliability assessments follow the guidelines of established experts such as Sugiyono (2011) and Ghozali (2015).

Result and Discussion

The research findings are explained by referring to data obtained from respondents from the Minang, Aceh, and Batak tribes in North Sumatra. This research focuses on social responsibility in assisting families living in poverty, as well as how society views poverty and efforts to address it.

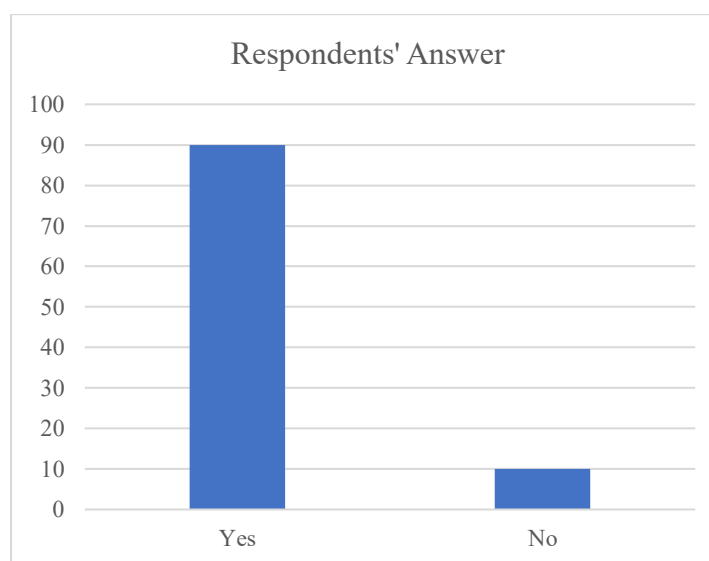


Figure 1: Percentage Graph

Research findings indicate that the majority of respondents (90%) acknowledge having helped family members who are in poverty, which demonstrates a high sense of social responsibility among them.



Figure 2: Percentage Graph

In addition, the data shows that parents are the top priority when it comes to assistance, with 85% of respondents stating that they feel responsible for helping their parents. The data obtained supports these results through a graph that shows the percentage of respondents who aided in various forms, such as giving money, finding jobs, or offering skills training.

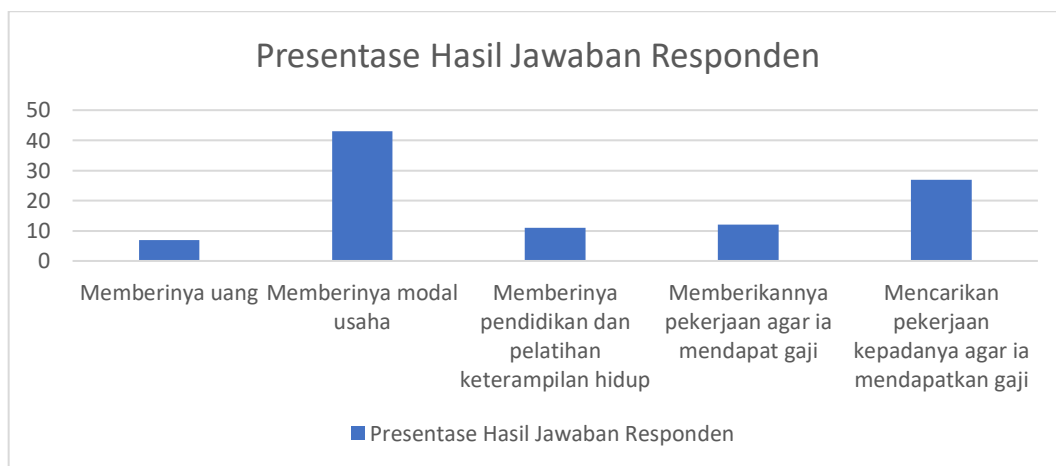


Figure 3: Percentage Graph

The graph above illustrates that 43% of respondents chose to provide business capital as a form of assistance. This suggests that the community prefers to offer support that promotes the economic independence of family members in need. Additionally, 27% of respondents indicated that they help by finding employment opportunities for relatives. This reflects an awareness of the importance of job creation as a key strategy in addressing poverty. Although the percentage is lower, some respondents also prioritized education and life skills training. These findings indicate ongoing efforts to improve the capabilities of family members, equipping them to face challenges in the job market more effectively. The graph presents the distribution of assistance provided in the form of direct financial support, capital loans, job

placements, and life skills training. This data offers a clear picture of the community's preferences in supporting family members experiencing financial hardship. The results support the hypothesis that communities in North Sumatra exhibit a strong sense of social responsibility toward relatives facing poverty. Given the high level of respondent involvement in various forms of assistance, the hypothesis is confirmed. Furthermore, the findings highlight that poverty is viewed not solely as an individual issue, but as a collective social concern requiring shared action and responsibility.

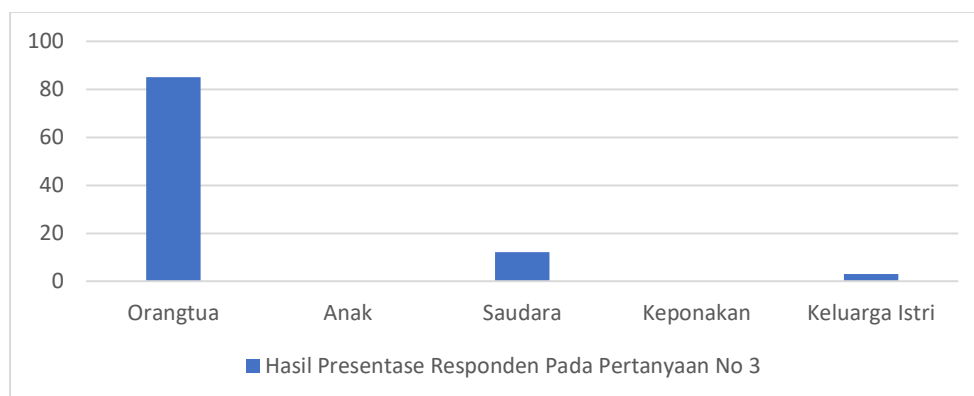


Figure 4: Percentage Graph

Based on Figure 4, the three ethnic groups—Minangkabau, Acehnese, and Batak—primarily assist their families in accordance with their respective cultural customs. The data shows that the highest percentage of assistance, at 85%, is directed toward parents. This indicates a shared cultural value across these communities: supporting one's parents is seen as a fundamental responsibility. This reflects the broader societal norm that caring for parents is a moral and social obligation. According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Rohmah, 2016), responsibility is defined as the state of being obliged to bear and fulfill duties, including being accountable and accepting the consequences of one's actions.

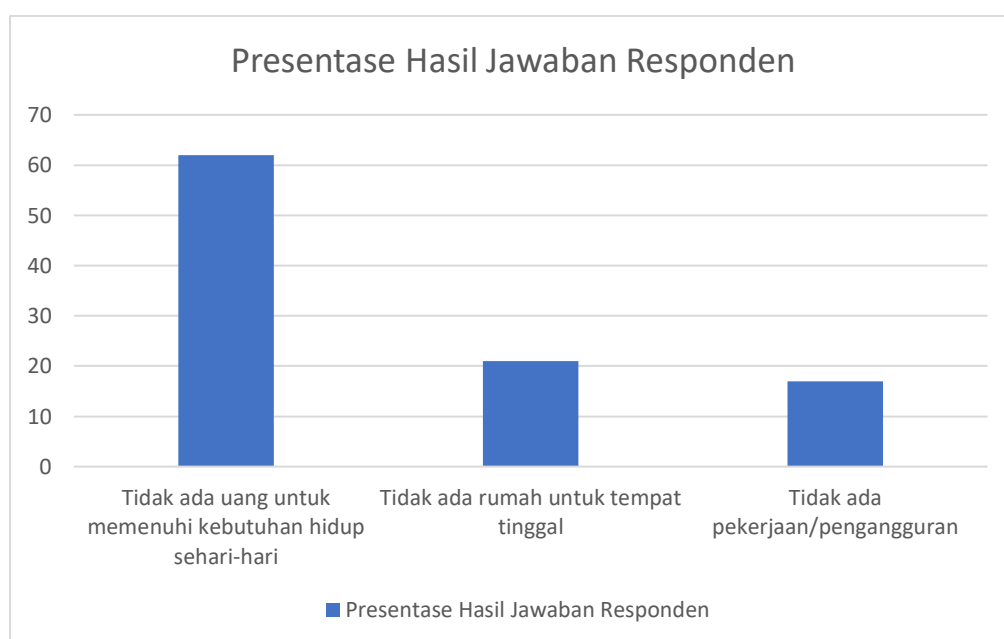


Figure 5: Percentage Graph

Based on Figure 5, it can be concluded that the most common response, chosen by 62% of respondents from the Minangkabau, Acehnese, and Batak communities living in North Sumatra, was the inability to afford daily necessities. Therefore, individuals who cannot meet their daily needs are categorized as poor. The research findings indicate that these communities exhibit a strong sense of social responsibility toward impoverished family members. Their primary forms of assistance include providing business capital and helping relatives find employment, with the aim of promoting economic independence. Additionally, there is growing awareness of the importance of life skills training as a means of preparing individuals to meet the challenges of the job market. This study also underscores that poverty is seen not merely as an individual problem, but as a social issue requiring collective action. By offering various forms of support, the community actively contributes to empowering those in need and fostering more effective and sustainable poverty alleviation efforts.

This research presents its findings by linking them to the theory of *ashabiyyah* as proposed by Ibn Khaldun, which emphasizes the importance of social solidarity and cooperation in addressing poverty (Wicaksono & Faizah, 2020). The results indicate that community-based economic systems, which prioritize collaboration among members, can significantly enhance overall welfare. These findings align with contemporary theories that highlight the role of social interaction in fostering community development. The significance of these findings is evident in the way cooperation among community members improves not only access to resources but also strengthens the social cohesion needed to create an environment conducive to economic growth. The study also references previous research showing that effective social interventions can play a pivotal role in reducing poverty and improving the quality of life (Haikal, 2023).

A comparison with earlier studies—such as that by Sarmiati (2012)—underscores shared conclusions regarding the importance of social cooperation. However, it also reveals key differences in cultural contexts that shape the manifestation and dynamics of *ashabiyyah* within various communities. These cultural variations influence how solidarity is formed, sustained, and mobilized for economic advancement. The findings of this study are directly related to the research objectives outlined in the Introduction, particularly the goal of understanding how *ashabiyyah* can contribute to poverty alleviation. Each result is interpreted through a scientific lens, supported by valid and critical analysis. The study also acknowledges that while progress has been made, challenges remain—especially in maintaining social solidarity in an era increasingly defined by individualism and economic competition. Overall, the results of this research are consistent with earlier studies that highlight the relevance and impact of *ashabiyyah*. At the same time, they draw attention to contextual differences in its application. This research emphasizes the importance of adopting a more holistic approach to understanding and implementing the concept of *ashabiyyah*, not only to achieve specific economic goals but also to support broader social development objectives. It also encourages further research to explore how *ashabiyyah* operates across different socio-cultural contexts, which may lead to more effective and adaptable poverty alleviation strategies.

Conclusion

This research aims to explore the effectiveness of *ashabiyyah* as a tool for alleviating poverty in Indonesia, with a particular focus on the Acehnese, Minangkabau, and Batak communities. The methodology includes a qualitative analysis of how the concept of *ashabiyyah* is applied across these communities, along with observations of social interactions and cooperation among community members. The key findings indicate that the implementation of *ashabiyyah* can strengthen community ties and enhance cooperation, which, in turn, supports sustainable development. The study also highlights that effective poverty alleviation requires a

collaborative effort involving the government, the private sector, and the community. However, the research acknowledges its limitations in terms of scope and contextual focus, noting the need for further studies to generalize the findings across other regions in Indonesia. Practical recommendations for future researchers include adopting a more comprehensive and sustainable approach that takes into account individual, environmental, and structural social factors. Additionally, optimizing community efforts in fund allocation and establishing strategic partnerships is essential to improve the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs.

Author Contribution

Determine the contribution of each of your scriptwriters. A distinction is made between five types of contributions: Creating and designing analyses; Collecting data; Contributing data or analysis tools; perform analysis; Writing paper. Further contribution can be read at the Author Contributions.

Declaration of Competing Interest

We declare that we have no conflict of interest.

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