

PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH
STRENGTHENING BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS AT PONDOK
PESANTREN MAMBAUL KHOIRAT KETAPANG IN KETAPANG
REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of Pondok Pesantren Mambaul Khoirat in promoting community economic empowerment through the development of Islamic-based business partnerships in Ketapang Regency. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving pesantren leaders, santri, and local stakeholders. The findings reveal that the pesantren employs an integrated strategy encompassing entrepreneurship training, sharia-compliant cooperative management, and the establishment of sustainable business networks. These partnerships enhance access to market opportunities and financial resources, which in turn foster the economic independence of both santri and the surrounding community. This research concludes that Islamic boarding schools can serve as effective catalysts for grassroots economic development, with the Mambaul Khoirat model exemplifying a contextualized approach grounded in Islamic economic values.

Keywords: *Economic Empowerment; Business Partnership; Islamic Boarding School; Entrepreneurship; Ketapang Regency.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools are the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia that not only function as centers for the transmission of Islamic knowledge, but also as social and cultural centers of society, especially in rural areas (Zarkasyi, 2005). The existence of pesantren has become an integral part of the development of Indonesian civilization, which not only instills Islamic values, but also shapes the character, social ethics, and scientific integrity of the students. As autonomous institutions, pesantren are unique in combining Islamic teachings with local wisdom and, in some cases, elements of Western knowledge in their learning system. Traditional learning processes such as the recitation of yellow classical books are still the main character, but along with the times, many pesantren began to adopt modern curriculum systems to respond to the increasingly complex needs of society (Abdullah, 2006; Saeed, 2006). This shows the flexibility of pesantren in integrating Islamic values with the dynamics of social change, without losing their basic identity.

Furthermore, pesantren also have great potential in strengthening the people's economy. Historically, pesantren have grown with the community and become part of the people's economic system, especially through agricultural activities, animal husbandry, and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (Syafar, 2019). Islamic economic principles such as justice,

responsible ownership, balance, and social solidarity are in accordance with the spirit of empowerment carried out in the pesantren environment (Antonio, 2001) .

Pondok Pesantren Mambaul Khoirat Ketapang is one example of a pesantren that has attempted to empower the people's economy through a business partnership approach, santri cooperatives, and sharia-based entrepreneurship training. This pesantren not only focuses on the spiritual and intellectual strengthening of santri, but also fosters economic competence so that santri have economic independence after graduation. Economic activities such as agriculture, animal husbandry, and trade carried out by this pesantren show a real contribution to the social welfare and empowerment of the surrounding community (Hanani, 2013) . However, reality shows that of the thousands of pesantren spread across Indonesia, only a small number have been able to maximize their economic potential. This is often due to management limitations, lack of economic skills training, and weak access to strategic business partners. Therefore, optimizing the economic potential of pesantren through management empowerment and strengthening business partnerships is an urgency that cannot be ignored (Damihartini & Jahi, 2011) .

Pondok Pesantren Mambaul Khoirat Ketapang is one of the pesantren that is active in empowering the economy of the people. This pesantren develops various business units such as sharia cooperatives, agriculture, and entrepreneurship training for santri. The approach taken is holistic, covering spiritual, intellectual, and economic aspects. Field data shows that there is a real contribution of pesantren to increasing the economic independence of the surrounding community. This model is an example of contextual and applicable Islamic value-based pesantren economic practices.

Despite having great potential, most pesantren in Indonesia have not been optimal in utilizing economic opportunities. Limitations in management, market access, and skills training are the main obstacles faced. Only a small number of pesantren have successfully established strategic partnerships with external parties. In fact, in the midst of globalization, economic empowerment of pesantren is important to maintain their existence. Therefore, a systematic and Islamic value-based strategy is needed to encourage pesantren to become the economic powerhouse of the ummah.

The economic empowerment of pesantren is not only important to maintain the sustainability of the institution, but also to answer the socio-economic challenges of Muslims in the midst of globalization. In the Islamic perspective, as stated in QS. Ar-Ra'd verse 11, social and economic changes can only be realized if there is an active effort from the community itself, which in this case can be driven by local institutions such as pesantren. Therefore, through this study, researchers sought to explore more deeply the role of Pondok Pesantren Mambaul Khoirat Ketapang in the economic empowerment of the people, as part of a sustainable and far-reaching pesantren institution development strategy.

B. METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with phenomenological methods. This approach was chosen to explore the meaning of subjective experiences and socio-economic phenomena that occur in the Mambaul Khoirat Ketapang Islamic Boarding School environment. Phenomenology allows researchers to explore informants' perceptions and understanding of economic and empowerment practices that take place in the context of pesantren. The research was conducted in a location that had been determined purposively, namely Pondok Pesantren Mambaul Khoirat Ketapang, Ketapang Regency. The determination of this location is based on

the consideration that the pesantren has active business units and direct involvement in the economic development of the people.

The data sources in this study consist of: Primary data: obtained through in-depth interviews with pesantren caregivers, care staff, students, ustadz, and managers of pesantren business units. Secondary data in the form of administrative documents, economic activity reports, financial records, and other relevant documents. There are three main techniques used in data collection: Participatory observation, which is direct observation of economic activities and social interactions in the pesantren environment for two months. In-depth interviews, conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore broad and in-depth information from key informants and documentation, in the form of collecting archives, photos, and written records of the pesantren's economic and social activities.

Data analysis was conducted inductively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the validity of the data and increase the reliability of the findings, this study applied three main strategies: source triangulation, member checking, and audit trail. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from various sources, namely the results of interviews with pesantren caregivers, students, business unit managers, and relevant administrative documents. Member checking was done by asking informants to review the transcripts and initial interpretations made by researchers, to ensure that the information conveyed was in accordance with their intentions and experiences. The audit trail was systematically organized by recording the data collection process, analysis, and methodological decisions made throughout the research, allowing for replication or retracing by other researchers. With this approach, the integrity of the research results can be academically accounted for and ensure the credibility of the findings. The researcher followed the phenomenological data analysis procedure according to (Moustakas, 1994). With this approach, the research is expected to be able to reveal the strategic role of pesantren in supporting the people's economy comprehensively and contextually.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Strategic Role of Islamic Boarding Schools in Strengthening the People's Economy

Pondok Pesantren Mambaul Khoirat Ketapang shows that Islamic educational institutions can be the main actors in community economic empowerment. This pesantren adopts a holistic approach, which not only instills Islamic values, but also integrates Islamic economic principles in its daily practices. Based on observation data and interviews with students, pesantren caregivers, and the surrounding community, it was found that the pesantren actively carries out economic activities based on the principles of justice, balance, and sustainability, as emphasized by (Chapra, 2000) in his theory of Islamic economics as a system of ethics and social welfare.

Mambaul Khoirat Ketapang Islamic Boarding School shows that Islamic educational institutions not only play a role in transmitting Islamic values, but also as a spirituality-based community economic driver. This pesantren integrates Islamic economic principles into community entrepreneurship practices, such as distribution justice, prohibition of usury, and strengthening social solidarity. This approach reflects the economic model proposed by Chapra (2000), which emphasizes that the Islamic economic system is not only oriented towards market efficiency, but also towards achieving social welfare (*falāh*) through ethical and moral mechanisms. However, in contrast to the macro approach proposed by Chapra in the context of the state, the practice of Islamic economics in pesantren emphasizes micro and community-based

aspects, such as the management of Islamic cooperatives, entrepreneurship training, and santri participation in productive businesses. Based on field data, about 65% of senior santri are actively involved in pesantren business activities, and there has been an average increase in internal pesantren income of 18% per year in the last three years—an indicator that pesantren economic practices are able to create real economic impact at the community level.

Education and Entrepreneurship: Pillars of Santri Economic Independence

One of the flagship programs of Pondok Pesantren Mambaul Khoirat is structured entrepreneurship education. Santri not only learn religion, but are also trained in practical skills in agriculture, animal husbandry, and trade. This is in line with the concept of human capital in development economics which states that investment in education and skills will increase productivity and independence (Becker, 1993). The interview results show that more than 60% of santri who have completed their study period in pesantren have their own micro businesses or work in pesantren business units. This shows the direct impact of the entrepreneurship program on increasing the economic capacity of individuals. Research conducted by (Ahmed et al., 2021) in the *Journal of Islamic Marketing* states that Islamic value-based education combined with business training can increase the success rate of young Muslim entrepreneurs.

Pondok Pesantren Mambaul Khoirat Ketapang places entrepreneurship education as an integral part of the learning process. This program is not only extracurricular, but has been formally integrated into the pesantren's local curriculum through life skills subjects based on Islamic economic values. The santri are equipped with knowledge and business practices in organic farming, poultry and goat farming, as well as micro businesses such as food processing, convection, and digital printing. These types of businesses are designed to respond to the local needs of the surrounding community, such as the demand for fresh food, Muslim clothing, and printing services that were previously difficult to reach in the area. Based on internal pesantren data, around 63% of male students and 54% of female students actively participate in entrepreneurship programs, with access and training tailored to the needs and potential of each gender.

Furthermore, the results of a survey of alumni show that around 47% of santri who participated in entrepreneurship training have run independent businesses one year after graduation, both in the form of home-based businesses and community-based collaboratives. This shows that the approach applied by pesantren not only equips santri spiritually and intellectually, but also economically. This finding is in line with human capital theory (Becker, 1993) which emphasizes that investment in education and skills will result in increased productivity and individual economic independence. In the context of pesantren, entrepreneurship education based on Islamic values also functions as an instrument to strengthen business ethics and social sustainability in society.

Sharia Cooperatives as Instruments of Economic Inclusiveness

Sharia-based pesantren cooperatives play an important role in the economic empowerment of the surrounding community. Documentation data shows that the cooperative provides usury-free business capital to more than 80 active members, including santri and residents. This cooperative model adopts a fair and transparent profit-sharing system (*mudharabah* and *musyarakah*). The presence of this cooperative is proven to be able to reduce the community's dependence on conventional financial institutions that apply high interest rates. According to (Saiti et al., 2018) Islamic cooperatives make a positive contribution to

poverty reduction and increased financial inclusion in Muslim communities, especially when managed by religious educational institutions.

MSME Development and its Impact on the Local Economy

Pesantren Mambaul Khoirat also encourages santri and the surrounding community to develop MSMEs, both in the culinary, handicraft, and agricultural sectors. Field data shows that there are more than 15 business units directly affiliated with the pesantren that have successfully created new jobs. This supports the local economic spillover theory, in which the economic activity of an institution can encourage economic growth in the surrounding area (Porter, 1998) This economic empowerment practice also shows the close relationship between religiosity and productivity. As stated by (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007) , the Islamic economic system does not only aim at economic growth, but also at the achievement of maqashid sharia, namely benefit and social justice.

Social Implications of the Pesantren Economy

The economic activities carried out by pesantren have a broad impact on improving the welfare of the community. Not only the material aspect, but also the strengthening of social and moral values. Santri and the community are trained to manage businesses ethically, share profits, and preserve the environment. Programs such as organic farming, women's entrepreneurship training, and digital technology education for santri have brought significant social change. Data shows that the unemployment rate in the pesantren's neighborhood has decreased by 23% in the last three years, thanks to the pesantren's involvement in opening new jobs.

External Collaboration and Sustainability

Pesantren Mambaul Khoirat also cooperates with local governments, NGOs, and the private sector in developing a partnership economic model. This strategy strengthens the pesantren's economic resilience and expands market access for local products produced by santri and the community. The success of pesantren in implementing Islamic value-based economic empowerment shows that religious institutions can be a catalyst for equitable and sustainable economic change. This model can be replicated in other pesantren in Indonesia in an effort to strengthen the people's economy.

D. Conclusion

The strategic role of Pondok Pesantren Mambaul Khoirat in community-based economic empowerment in Ketapang Regency. By integrating Islamic values into economic activities, this pesantren is not only an educational center, but also the driving force of the community's economy. The existence of the pesantren brings real changes, especially in increasing access to training, business assistance, and partnerships with local economic actors. A holistic approach that includes Islamic value-based entrepreneurship, community capacity building, and partnership network development has proven effective in promoting economic and social welfare. Overall, the strengthening of pesantren business partnerships has had a significant impact in increasing the economic independence of the community and strengthening social and spiritual values in life.

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