



Economic Independence of Islamic Boarding Schools

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Abstract

Historically, Islamic boarding schools or pesantren have contributed greatly to the advancement of Islamic civilization in Indonesia. In addition to its function in the field of education, pesantren also have an important role in empowering the economy of the people. The independence of the pesantren can be applied to provide motivation and encouragement to students to become established in the economic field. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The purpose of this study is to describe the form of economic independence of pesantren using a case study at Riyadlul Jannah Islamic boarding school, Pacet. A pesantren that has a strong vision and mission in the fields of economy and empowerment. The finding of this research is that pesantren provide intensive education and instil an entrepreneurial spirit to the students, even brainwashing about the importance of entrepreneurship is given. The independence that is carried out is also not fixed on theory alone, but also in direct application to the various business units owned by the Islamic boarding school. Some of the business units owned by the Islamic boarding schools are restaurants, agriculture and fisheries, printing, mineral water production, and tours & travel.

Keywords: Independence; Islamic Boarding School; Entrepreneurship

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1. Introduction

Since before Indonesia's independence, there have been Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia (Arifin, 2022; Busyairi, 2017; Siddiq, 2023; Syakur et al., 2021). Islamic boarding schools are community-owned and operated Islamic educational institutions (Juhaidi et al., 2023) that have grown and developed since the spread of Islamic values in Indonesia. Historically, Islamic boarding schools have contributed greatly to the progress of Islamic civilization in Indonesia (Kutsiyah, 2020; Setiawan et al., 2023; Yumnah et al., 2021), both culturally, socially and economically in Indonesian society (Manullang, 2020). As stated in the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, number 18 of 2019, and published in the State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia, number 191, pesantren as religious education institutions currently have legal standing not only to carry out their main traditional functions, but also their community empowerment functions (Dinata, 2023; Mubarok, 2021).

The Islamic boarding school has a dexterity in building community economic growth ([Fauroni & Quraisy, 2019](#)). Islamic boarding school must gradually keep up with changes in dealing with economic globalization. The role of Islamic boarding school in the social economy requires independence in management. The majority of businesses run by the Islamic boarding school themselves have problems with human resource capacity, even though there are many opportunities that can be captured ([Ryandono, 2018](#)).

The potential for economic development needs to be explored deeper. Each Islamic boarding school has its own uniqueness in terms of its condition and location ([Ariatin et al., 2022](#); [Purbaya et al., 2022](#); [D. F. Wiyono, 2022](#)). Even so, Islamic boarding schools have the same advantages. Islamic boarding school has figure of a charismatic leader ([Eriyanto, 2023](#); [Hidayah, 2022](#); [Ikhwan et al., 2022](#); [Khoiri et al., 2022](#)) who can provide value to management ([Hariyadi et al., 2018](#)). The leadership figure of the teacher or as better known as *Kyai*, provides great interaction with businesses that are being run with groups that have a business relationship ([Khusniyah, 2014](#)). As stated by [Wijayati and Rahman \(2022\)](#) that Islamic leadership in this industrial revolution era, has a positive impact on work ethics and work engagement.

The Riyadlul Jannah Islamic boarding school is one of the boarding schools that does not only focus on the religious field, but also applies and practices economics directly ([Zaki et al., 2020](#)). This Islamic boarding school received several award certificates in relation to economic independence. A curriculum system based on the *salaf* religious model is combined with an increase in entrepreneurial knowledge for the students.

This study discusses the form of Islamic boarding school economic independence in managing business units for its every need. Several studies have conducted research on the economic aspects of Islamic boarding schools, one research ([Hafidh, Z., 2018](#)). [Ryandono \(2018\)](#) analysed the socio-economic empowerment of Islamic boarding schools by listing data of the Islamic boarding schools in East Java. Based on several existing studies, this study discusses the efforts made by Islamic boarding schools in managing business units to achieve economic independence by exploring and analysing economic independence at Riyadlul Jannah Islamic boarding schools, Pacet, Mojokerto, East Java.

2. Literature Review

[Zaki et al. \(2020\)](#) in their research discussed the implementation of entrepreneurship implemented by Islamic boarding schools. The pupils or the *santri* (students) who study at the boarding school are equipped with entrepreneurial knowledge which can later be implemented when they have graduated ([Kasidi et al., 2021](#)). According to the findings of the study by [Zaki et al. \(2020\)](#), an entrepreneurial culture in an Islamic boarding school can foster an entrepreneurial mindset with Islamic perspective. Increasing aspects of faith, spiritual benefits, and utilization of assets in accordance with Islamic teachings become a culture created in the implementation of pesantren entrepreneurship.

Another study was conducted by [Ariani & Bawono \(2018\)](#). In their research, it is explained that there are several variables that describe the development of the creative economy in the Islamic boarding school. The variables are (1) tradition instilled in the Islamic boarding school, (2) resources and technology, (3) the number of religious teachers. The pesantren tradition is a component created for students with the development of an entrepreneurial spirit. The students received entrepreneurship learning and entrepreneurial motivation afterwards.

In the context of entrepreneurship learning, the entrepreneurial behavior that the students in this pesantren needed was highlighted by [Segaf \(2022\)](#) in his study. [Segaf \(2022\)](#) found and divide those values in three categories: personal behavior, social behavior, and spiritual behavior. The pesantren educates the students about all these entrepreneurial behaviors in the context of the process of economic empowerment through pesantren and after graduated they will be able to empower

communities. This is as stated by [Gufran and Hairi \(2019\)](#) that pesantren is able to produce knowledgeable human resources and is able to improve the economy of the community around the pesantren.

[Nadzir \(2015\)](#) explains that pesantren have great potential to empower the people's economy. Values in religious ethics have a strong role in mobilizing the economic spirit. Some Islamic boarding schools have realized that not all students are molded to become scholars, so they try to provide entrepreneurship to the students. Entrepreneurship-oriented strategies can significantly improve the ability of organizational performance in boarding schools. ([Rofiaty, 2019](#)). Furthermore, pesantren alumni who have been forged while in pesantren can create a strong community bond to become the basis of social capital that supports the existence of alumni who become Muslim entrepreneurs. As [Cahyono's \(2022\)](#) research on the importance of this bond of trust in business competition that occurs between community groups.

3. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research approach. [Yin \(2009\)](#) explains that a qualitative approach is an approach using data in the form of written or oral sentences, events, knowledge or descriptive study projects. The method used is a case study method by taking a location at Pondok Pesantren Riyadlul Jannah, Pacet, Mojokerto in 2020. Crucial factors that are taken into consideration in determining data collection methods are the types and sources of data. The types and sources of data in this study are divided into two, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through interviews with administrators and staff of Riyadlul Jannah Islamic boarding school who directly manage the pesantren business unit. Secondary data was obtained through documentation and archives supporting the research.

The data validation used a triangulation model when testing the validity of the data obtained from interviews, observation and documentation. The purpose of the triangulation technique is to increase the researcher's understanding and knowledge of what has been found in data collection ([Jentoft & Olsen, 2019](#); [Sciberras & Dingli, 2023](#); [Shih, 1998](#)). Source triangulation is carried out to determine and test the credibility of data obtained during observations in the field by checking data sources on several sources ([Sauri et al., 2022](#)). In this study, source checking was carried out by conducting interviews with various sources. The results of the informant's answers to one another were validated to obtain appropriate and balanced answers.

4. Results And Discussion

Riadlul Jannah Islamic boarding school is located in Pacet village, Mojokerto. It is located in the golden triangle area proclaimed by the Mojokerto Regency government ([Sirojuddin et al., 2022](#); [J. Wiyono, 2023](#)). This Islamic boarding school has an area of about 9,000 square meters. Founded in 1985 by KH Mahfudz Syaubari, based on the wishes of the community, the Kyai established this boarding school ([Al-Asrory, 2020](#); [Kurniawan & Yuliana, 2019](#)). The number of students in 2019, there are 738 students living in Islamic boarding schools. Like other Islamic boarding schools in general, the Riyadlul Jannah provides recitations to students using the salaf method, both in the study of classical books and tahfidzul quran ([Al-Asrory, 2020](#)). Not only for the pupils, but the recitations are also given to the surrounding community which is followed by hundreds of congregations.

The peculiarities of the pesantren in achieving economic independence are reflected in the business units managed directly by the pesantren ([Salim et al., 2021](#)). The implementation of this management also collaborates with other Islamic boarding schools, both as investors and as business partners. As an example of cooperation with Sidogiri. Dapur M'riah (DM) and M2M fast-food restaurants are one of their business units that have many branches. A restaurant business unit is under the management of the pesantren which is one of the business units of Rjan Dynamis Selaras. LTD (RDS). The company was founded and managed directly by all of santri. There are 10 DM branches

spread across various cities in Indonesia, including outside Java in Pontianak. Other businesses include minimarkets, agribusiness, tours & travels, printing, mineral drinking water, convection, and property. Overall, the turnover generated from the business units can reach Rp. 5 billion/month.

Economic independence in pesantren is taught to students by creating an entrepreneurial mentality (Adinugraha, 2022; Apud & Akrom, 2020; Vishkurti, 2022). From the observations and interviews conducted, the figure of teachers or Kyai becomes a role model in building economic independence by the way they (teachers or Kyai) are directly involved in management, both in pesantren and in the business units they run. One model of learning entrepreneurial independence for students is the existence of Rijan Mart. Santri learns how to manage this multipurpose shop. In addition, some students are also given skills, such as sewing clothes.

Independence is defined by the Kyai with the phrase "independence is the act of not depending on anyone except only on Allah SWT". This message provides motivation to fulfill the needs of life in terms of finance, daily needs to support life, and other needs. This attitude is implemented in the management of the pesantren and instilled in the santri. Another doctrine and thought are, "Son, when you study at this pesantren you will not be guaranteed to become a Kyai, but I want to make a Kyai business so that in the end not only become a Kyai and also not only become an entrepreneur." The purpose of this wish is to encourage the santri to become entrepreneurs when they go into the community. The pesantren takes 10% of the net profit of the business unit for operations, including scholarships for the students and the development of the pesantren.

The proceeds from these business units not only generate income for the people running the businesses but also benefit the students. There is a pesantren policy that they will accept orphaned students free of charge as a form of scholarship. Even those who cannot afford it will be given relief by paying what they can. There are about 40-50 students who will receive scholarships each year. The scholarships are taken from the profits of the pesantren's business units. The pesantren will take 10% of the net profit of the business units for operations that include scholarships for students and pesantren development.

The cultivation of the value of economic independence is not only applied materially but also to the spiritual aspects of the students. For example, students are not allowed to sleep after dawn because it will cause poverty. Routinely perform Dhuha prayers as a wasilah or as a means of facilitating fortune and other spiritual activities. These activities are continuously carried out by the students so that they remain embedded in their lives. There are many spiritual concepts given by the Kyai in carrying out economic independence.



Source: Author's elaboration

Figure. 1. Three main elements form the economic independence of pesantren.

The results of this case study research show that there are three main elements (Figure.1) that build and support the economic independence of Islamic boarding schools, including:

a) Collaboration between entrepreneurship and Sufistic characteristics

The hallmark of Sufism is the way we can cleanse ourselves ([Yustika, 2021](#)) and can anticipate things that can weaken our faith ([Akbar et al., 2022](#); [Yunita et al., 2022](#)). There are those who think that Sufism recommends that we only do dhikr and leave everything else ([Othman, 2022](#)). Actually, it is not like that. Dhikr is a wasilah or means to obtain clarity of heart ([Nikmah & Muluk, 2022](#); [Sucipto, 2020](#)). Once the heart is clear, the next step is thinking. After we think, then we continue with the application of our abilities by doing all forms of work. With that, there is a balance and that balance cannot be ignored.

One of the caretaker, Kyai Mahfudz Syaubari, stated the needs of a balanced attitude orientation between the needs of the world and the hereafter, quoted from the words of Sufi scholar Syekh Abul Hasan Al-Syadzili, "If your food is good, your drink is good, your clothes are good, your house is good, your vehicle is good, when you are spoken. say thanks "Alhamdulillah", then everyone will come along to say "Alhamdulillah". But if on the other hand, the food is not good, the drink too, the house and others are not good, when the person is grateful to God, then everyone will shout, "you are indeed a liar". This message really gives meaning to the importance of balance and a Kyai or ulama provides a role model for the community to always work hard and be followed closely with gratitude. Therefore, the zuhud spirit is always emphasized as a fortress from worldly greed ([Khunaifi et al., 2022](#)) and disorientation ([Subaidi, 2016](#)).

b) Self-reliance and Social Mission

Riyadlul Jannah Islamic Boarding School has three main orientations in its management, namely business, education, and social orientations. First, in the business orientation, the pesantren realizes that humans need to fulfill their needs. Because humans are material beings. These needs cannot be met if they only depend on others. Therefore, the pesantren does not encourage students to depend on other people for their needs. For example, in the needs of pesantren, a Kyai with his authority does not have to make proposals to obtain funds. This is considered to lower one's dignity. Therefore, entrepreneurship and self-reliance will have more value and dignity. Furthermore, Kyai must be a good role model. This implementation is carried out by the pesantren by establishing several business units that are managed independently.

Second, educational orientation. This orientation is a form of pesantren function in educating the nation's children ([Adabi & Awwaliyah, 2021](#); [Dinata, 2023](#); [Zainal, 2022](#)). Pesantren in its application to educate the nation, the Kyai independently traveled to various regions. In collaboration with various universities and various communities that have an important role in the world of education and entrepreneurship. The principle adopted is "when the nation is able to finance the state, then whoever is in power must accept the nation's mandate". Education must be oriented towards independence and education must have absolute sovereignty ([Vu Van Binh, 2021](#)) so that it is not easily influenced and hindered by institutions that are not in power.

Third, social orientation. The economic independence that is carried out must also provide benefits to the existing community ([Anjar & ZA, 2021](#)). There are two things that Islamic boarding schools do in their social mission: (1) micro-social, where the Islamic boarding schools take 10% of the profit margin (after zakat) which is distributed directly to the community. (2) macro-social, which is how the boarding school participates in financing the state by paying taxes of 10% of profits. This social orientation is contained in the firmly held principle "human beings, don't be proud to receive, instead give through hard work".

c) Work Ethics in Self-Reliance

The Kyai of the Islamic boarding school provides an example for the students in terms of independence by going directly to the real sectors. In addition, students are also encouraged to become entrepreneurs when they graduate. They are trained to take risks. Another principle practiced is "work smart, hard, and sincere, the strength is the harmony in data, capital, and prayers". This principle means that a person should not take a leisurely stroll. The nation's culture of hard work must be instilled in filling independence. In addition, they must face the risks that will occur with sincerity. Therefore, work ethic is also applied in running the business units.

When faced with risk, students are required to have a high work ethic. They have a commitment to being self-reliant. This commitment will grow a determination. Commitment is an act of not giving up and will not stop at any cost to reach the end goals ([Rahman et al., 2022](#); [Syafri et al., 2022](#)). Through this high work ethic while being a student, later on after graduation they will instill the spirit of working hard, entrepreneurship, doing business, and so on.

Based on the results of the research conducted, Riyadlul Jannah Islamic Boarding School has a very strong concept of pesantren independence. This is also reflected in the research conducted by [Ainurrofiq \(2023\)](#), [Puspita \(2022\)](#), [Wahyudi \(2022\)](#), [Baharun et al. \(2022\)](#), dan [Segaf \(2022\)](#) in this pesantren. Economic independence is implemented in the management of profitable business units.

5. Conclusion

These business units are not only in one business field but in various business fields in various places in Indonesia. This has become a milestone in the independence of pesantren in the economic field because so far pesantren have only been seen on the basis of religious education. Economic independence is also very beneficial for the world of education, one of which is by providing scholarships for students obtained from the profits of business units. The development of pesantren also becomes easier to realize. The independence efforts cannot be separated from the three orientations carried out by Riyadlul Jannah Islamic boarding school so that it becomes evident that the pesantren have a strong determination to build independence.

Future research can consider creating an ideal model that can be carried out by pesantren towards economic independence. So far, studies on the pesantren economy are still very minimal, both among academics and practitioners. Thus, exploring the economic independence of pesantren will provide benefits to the economy, especially in microeconomics and entrepreneurship.

Author contribution statement

Denizar Abdurrahman Mi'raj, writing and analyzing the data

Irham Zaki, collecting and analyzing the data

Fatin Fadhillah Hasib, collecting the data

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