



PESANTRENPRENEUR AS AN AGENT OF ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION: A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP MODEL BASED ON ISLAMIC VALUE

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Article's Information

DOI:

10.37253/jgbmr.v8i1.12384

e-ISSN:

2685-3426

EDITORIAL HISTORY:

SUBMISSION: 2026-04-18

ACCEPTED: 2026-07-02

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Jember, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of pesantrenpreneurs as agents of economic transformation based on Islamic values and to construct a model of social entrepreneurship within the pesantren environment. The study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design at the Darussalam Blokagung Pesantren in Banyuwangi. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, involving administrators, business managers, students, and stakeholders selected through purposive and snowball sampling. The results reveal four main themes: the internalization of Islamic values in entrepreneurship, the role of students as agents of change, a business model based on social impact, and the limitations of measuring social impact. The findings indicate that pesantrenpreneurs are capable of integrating spiritual, educational, and economic dimensions in a sustainable manner, although they are not yet supported by an evaluation system such as SROI. This study contributes to the development of Islamic social entrepreneurship and provides practical implications for strengthening business models and social impact evaluation in Islamic boarding schools.

Keywords: *pesantrenpreneur, Islamic social entrepreneurship, santri as change agents, social business model, social impact, social return on investment (SROI), economic empowerment, pesantren*

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, socially-driven economic transformation has seen significant development on a global scale, particularly through the approach of social entrepreneurship, which integrates economic goals and social impact in a sustainable manner (Ismail, 2025). From an Islamic perspective, this concept emphasizes not only profitability but also the achievement of social justice (*adl*), collective well-being (*maslahah*), and sustainability grounded in Sharia ethics (Iskandar, 2025). In Indonesia, this dynamic aligns with the context of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), which no longer function solely as religious educational institutions but also as centers for community economic empowerment. The phenomenon of “pesantrenpreneurs” indicates a paradigm shift toward a community-based economic model that integrates education, spirituality, and entrepreneurship.

Empirically, social entrepreneurship practices within *pesantren* environments have evolved through various models, such as the management of productive business units, the utilization of productive *waqf*, and the integration of Islamic social funds (*zakat*, *infak*, *sedekah*, and *waqf*) into economic activities (Baharun et al., 2025). In this context, the Islamic social entrepreneurship approach is understood as a model that combines religious values with business innovation to create broad social impact (Fentari & Dalail, 2025). On the other hand, social impact-based business models are also beginning to be adopted through frameworks such as the Social Business Model Canvas and community based approaches, which position beneficiaries as part of the business ecosystem. Furthermore, measuring social impact through the Social Return on Investment (SROI) method has been used to evaluate the

effectiveness of Islamic finance based social programs, particularly in measuring the social value generated and comparing it to the investment made (Wibisono et al., 2025).

Although these various approaches show positive developments, existing studies still have several limitations. First, most studies tend to focus on institutional or financial aspects without delving deeply into the process of social transformation experienced by the main actors, namely the *santri*. Second, the social entrepreneurship models developed remain partial or incomplete and have not yet been integrated into a conceptual framework that systematically links Islamic values, the role of change agents, and impact based business models. Third, the use of SROI in the *pesantren* context is still limited to the evaluation of specific programs and has not yet been integrated as part of a comprehensive business model design. Thus, there is a significant research gap in understanding how pesantrenpreneur practices can be constructed as a holistic, values-based model of economic transformation.

From a qualitative perspective, it is important to understand that economic transformation in *pesantren* is not only related to economic output but also to the processes of meaning making, experiences, and values internalized by *santri* as agents of change. Students do not merely serve as labor in business units but also as subjects simultaneously undergoing social, spiritual, and economic learning processes. Therefore, a qualitative approach is relevant for exploring these dynamics in depth, including how Islamic values are translated into social entrepreneurship practices and how social impacts are generated and interpreted by the actors involved (MAGHFIROH, 2025).

Based on this background and these gaps, this study aims to construct a model

of the transformative pesantrenpreneur as an agent of economic transformation grounded in Islamic values. The focus of the study includes: (1) exploring the concept of Islamic social entrepreneurship, (2) analyzing the role of *santri* as agents of change, (3) developing a social-impact-based business model, and (4) integrating impact measurement through the SROI approach. Theoretically, this study offers a novel approach by integrating Islamic values, the social entrepreneurship approach, and impact evaluation into a single, comprehensive conceptual model. Practically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of more systematic, measurable, and sustainable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Islamic social entrepreneurship has evolved as an integration of social entrepreneurship theory and the principles of Islamic economics, which emphasize the values of justice, public benefit, and sustainability (Fransiska et al., 2025). In this approach, the goal of a business is not merely profit but also the creation of social value based on *maqāṣid al-syari‘ah*, such as the protection of property, life, and the well-being of society (Iskandar, 2025). Operationally, indicators of Islamic social entrepreneurship include social orientation, Sharia compliance, business innovation, and economic sustainability. In the context of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), this concept intersects with the role of students (*santri*) as agents of change who not only receive normative education but are also engaged in productive economic practices. Theories of social change position educated individuals as catalysts for social transformation through the internalization of values and concrete practices (Septiani & Aeni, 2025). Therefore, students can be understood as agents of transformation

who bridge religious values with social entrepreneurship practices in community life.

Furthermore, the impact-driven business model serves as a crucial framework for implementing social entrepreneurship (El Ebrashi, 2013). This model emphasizes the creation of a “double bottom line” that is, economic profit and measurable social impact. Approaches such as the social business model canvas identify key elements such as the social value proposition, beneficiary segments, revenue streams, and strategic partners within the social ecosystem (Sholikhah & Marjayanti, 2021). From an Islamic perspective, this model is reinforced by social finance instruments such as *zakat*, *waqf*, and *sadaqah*, which serve as resources to support the sustainability of social enterprises. However, the main challenge in this model lies in measuring social impact, which is often intangible and difficult to capitalize on within a conventional economic framework.

To address these challenges, the Social Return on Investment (SROI) approach is used as a method for evaluating social impact that measures the ratio of social value generated to the investment made. SROI enables organizations to quantify social benefits in monetary terms, thereby facilitating the analysis of program effectiveness. SROI indicators include stakeholder identification, outcome mapping, impact attribution, and the conversion of social value into economic units. In the context of Islamic social entrepreneurship, SROI measures not only economic impact but also the spiritual and social value generated by Sharia based activities. However, several studies indicate that the implementation of SROI still faces methodological challenges, such as data limitations, subjectivity in impact assessment, and the failure to integrate

SROI into business model design from the outset (Saputra, 2025).

Previous research indicates that social entrepreneurship practices in *pesantren* have grown, but still face conceptual and implementation limitations. Studies on social entrepreneurship in Islamic educational institutions show that *pesantren* are capable of achieving economic self-sufficiency through business diversification and the utilization of productive waqf, but have not yet comprehensively integrated business models and impact measurement (Fentari & Dalail, 2025). Other research on SROI based social impact measurement in Islamic zakat and philanthropy programs indicates that this method is effective in assessing social benefits, yet it remains partial and has not yet been incorporated into business strategies. Meanwhile, a systematic review of Islamic social enterprises confirms that there remains a gap in the integration of Islamic values, business models, and impact evaluation systems within a single, cohesive conceptual framework. Thus, the theoretical and empirical gap in this study lies in the absence of an integrative model that connects the role of *santri* as agents of change, the concept of Islamic social entrepreneurship, impact-based business models, and SROI measurement within the *pesantren* context.

Based on the above discussion, this study adopts a conceptual framework that integrates four main components, namely: (1) the values and principles of Islamic social entrepreneurship as a normative foundation, (2) *santri* as agents of change who drive the process of socioeconomic transformation, (3) a social impact based business model as an operational mechanism, and (4) SROI as a tool for evaluating the success of the impact. The relationship among these components indicates that the internalization of Islamic values influences *santri*'s entrepreneurial

behavior, which is then manifested in a social-impact business model and subsequently measured through SROI as an indicator of the transformation's success. Thus, the proposed conceptual hypothesis is that the integration of these four elements can produce a transformative *pesantrenpreneur* model capable of generating sustainable economic and social impacts.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of “*pesantrenpreneurs*” as agents of economic transformation grounded in Islamic values (Miller et al., 2023). The case study approach was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive contextual exploration of the processes, meanings, and social dynamics occurring within a specific environment. Case studies are also relevant because the research focus is on understanding real world practices in their natural settings, rather than quantitatively testing causal relationships (Pokharel et al., 2024). This study was conducted at the Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School in Banyuwangi in 2026, which is known for its thriving *pesantren* entrepreneurship activities. The research subjects consisted of boarding school administrators, business unit managers, students involved in entrepreneurial activities, and alumni playing a role in business development. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) direct involvement in *pesantrenpreneur* activities, (2) understanding of business management processes or social programs, and (3) willingness to provide in-depth information. Data collection took place in May and involved two to three informants. In depth interviews were conducted online via the WhatsApp

instant messaging platform, where informants provided responses in real time, ensuring the authenticity of the data. Prior to data collection, permission to publish was obtained from the Islamic boarding school that served as the research subject.

Data collection was conducted using a triangulation approach through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore informants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of *pesantren*-based social entrepreneurship practices, using flexible guiding questions to allow for in-depth data exploration (de Loyola González-Salgado et al., 2024). Participatory observation was conducted by directly engaging in *pesantren* activities, particularly in business units and economic empowerment programs, to understand these practices in a contextual and authentic manner. Documentation involved analyzing institutional documents, financial reports, business programs, and relevant activity archives. To ensure data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation that is, comparing data from various informants and data collection techniques. Additionally, member checking was conducted by confirming interview results with informants to ensure the accuracy of interpretations, and an audit trail was maintained to systematically document the research process (Agilan, 2026).

Data analysis in this study utilized the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which comprises three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification (Huberman & Miles, 2002). The analysis process was conducted simultaneously as data collection took place, beginning with open coding to identify initial themes, followed by axial coding to uncover patterns of

relationships among concepts. Subsequently, thematic interpretation was conducted to develop a deeper understanding of the transformative *pesantrenpreneur* model. This approach allows researchers to integrate empirical findings with the theoretical framework employed. The validity of the analysis results was strengthened through a process of continuous verification, discussions among researchers (where applicable), and critical reflection on the data obtained. Thus, this methodology was designed to produce findings that are credible, contextual, and contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of *pesantren*-based social entrepreneurship.

RESULTS

The results of this study indicate that the practice of “*pesantrenpreneur*” at the Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School does not merely represent economic activity, but rather constitutes a process of socioeconomic transformation rooted in Islamic values that are internalized within the life of the boarding school. Based on an analysis of interview data, observations, and documentation, it was found that the pattern of entrepreneurship development in the *pesantren* is shaped through the integration of religious values, the educational system, and productive economic practices. In general, the research findings converge on four main themes, namely: (1) the internalization of Islamic values in entrepreneurship, (2) students as agents of economic change, (3) the construction of a social-impact-based business model, and (4) limitations in measuring social impact.

The first theme shows that Islamic values serve as the primary foundation for all entrepreneurial activities at the *pesantren*. Values such as sincerity,

trustworthiness, hard work, and blessings are not only taught as norms but are also practiced in daily economic activities. This is reflected in the statement of one business manager who said that “the main goal of this business is not merely profit, but how it can benefit the students and the surrounding community.” This finding indicates that the business orientation in Islamic boarding schools does not fully follow capitalist logic but rather prioritizes social benefit. In this context, the concept of Islamic social entrepreneurship is realized contextually as a practice that integrates spiritual and economic dimensions into an inseparable whole.

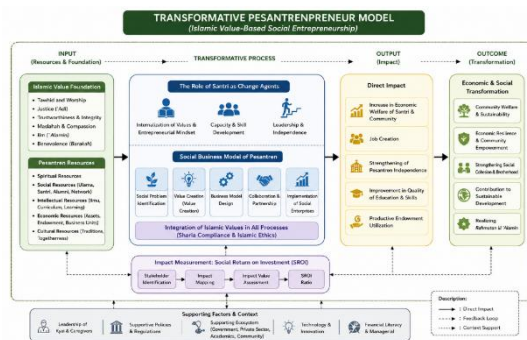
The second theme highlights the role of *santri* as agents of economic transformation through their active involvement in Kopontren’s business units, particularly in the wholesale and basic foodstuffs sectors. Research findings indicate that *santri* not only act as consumers but also as direct participants in business management. Through their involvement in managing the wholesale distribution of basic foodstuffs, *santri* gain comprehensive experience ranging from inventory management and marketing strategies to customer service. This process gradually instills entrepreneurial capacity in the *santri*, encompassing technical skills in commerce as well as the development of independent character and integrity. One student explained that “almost everything involved in running the student-run store is handled by the students themselves; the store manager (Mr. Hamam) is merely an overseer”. From ordering items that are out of stock or sold out, managing fast-moving inventory, organizing the store, preparing purchase orders, checking inventory, shipping goods, to cleaning the store all of these tasks are carried out by the students. “It really is from scratch. Even at the main Ausath Mart Putra store, everything from

managing the store to serving customers is done entirely by the students.” These findings indicate that the *pesantren* functions as an effective experiential learning environment for fostering an entrepreneurial mindset. Thus, students are not merely objects of education but develop into active agents in the process of economic transformation.

The third theme reveals that the business models developed by *pesantren* are characterized by a focus on social impact. The business units they operate serve not only as a source of income for the institutions but also as a means of empowering students and the surrounding community. The resulting impacts include job creation, skills development, and the strengthening of the local economy. An external stakeholder stated that “the existence of *pesantren* businesses greatly helps the surrounding community, especially in creating job opportunities and small businesses.” However, this study also found that these business models remain informal in terms of planning and impact evaluation, meaning they are not yet fully structured within a systematic social business framework.

The fourth theme highlights limitations in measuring the resulting social impact. Although the social impact is tangibly felt by students and the community, Islamic boarding schools do not yet have a formal evaluation system capable of measuring this social value in a structured manner, such as through the Social Return on Investment (SROI) approach. Measuring the success of these ventures is still based on simple indicators, such as business sustainability and direct benefits for the students. This indicates a gap between existing social entrepreneurship practices and an

evaluation system grounded in scientific methodology.



Picture 1. Transformatif *Pesantren* Preneur Model (Islamic Value Based Social Entrepreneurship)

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

From a theoretical perspective, these findings reinforce the concept that *pesantrenpreneurs* represent a distinct form of Islamic social entrepreneurship with characteristics that differ from conventional social entrepreneurship models. While in conventional models the primary focus lies on balancing profit and social impact, in the *pesantren* context, the spiritual dimension becomes a central element that influences business orientation and practices. This explains why success is measured not only by economic indicators but also by the perceived blessings and social benefits.

Furthermore, the role of *santri* as agents of change indicates an expansion of the *pesantren*'s educational function from the mere transmission of knowledge toward socioeconomic transformation. This finding offers a new perspective: *pesantren*-based education holds strategic potential for cultivating social entrepreneurs grounded in Islamic values. Compared to previous studies that emphasized institutional aspects, the results of this research highlight the role of

the actors (*santri*) as a key element in the success of the “*pesantrenpreneur*” model.

From a business model perspective, the results of this study indicate that although social entrepreneurship practices are already underway, there is still a need for strengthening in the areas of strategic planning and impact measurement. The absence of systems such as SROI suggests that *pesantren* are still in the practical phase and have not yet fully transitioned to a data-driven evaluative phase. This presents both an opportunity and a challenge in developing a more structured and replicable “*pesantrenpreneur*” model.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that the development of *pesantrenpreneurs* requires stronger integration among values, actors, business systems, and evaluation mechanisms. This study also opens the door for the development of a conceptual model that not only emphasizes economic aspects but also considers the spiritual dimension as a key variable. For future research, it is recommended to develop a contextual approach to measuring social impact grounded in Islamic values, thereby bridging the gap between qualitative and quantitative approaches in the study of *pesantren*-based social entrepreneurship.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations that must be openly acknowledged so that the findings can be understood in context and serve as a foundation for future research.

First, this study employs a qualitative approach using a single-case study design at the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School in Blokagung, Banyuwangi. Although this approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the “*pesantrenpreneur*” phenomenon, the findings are contextual and cannot be directly generalized to other Islamic

boarding schools with different institutional characteristics, organizational cultures, and economic capacities.

Second, the measurement of social impact in this study remains descriptive and qualitative in nature and has not yet comprehensively integrated quantitative approaches such as Social Return on Investment (SROI). This is due to the limited availability of structured financial data at the *pesantren* business unit level, making it impossible to optimally convert social value into measurable economic units.

Third, the selection of informants using purposive and snowball sampling techniques has the potential to result in selection bias, whereby the selected informants tend to be those who hold positive views toward the *pesantrenpreneur* practice. Critical perspectives from those who are less involved or who have different experiences have not been fully accommodated.

Fourth, this study was conducted over a relatively limited time frame, so it was not able to capture the dynamics of *pesantren* entrepreneurship development longitudinally. Long-term changes whether in business models, students' capacities, or social impacts on the surrounding community require research with a longer time horizon.

Fifth, the spiritual dimension, as a key variable in the *pesantrenpreneur* model, remains difficult to operationalize into scientifically measurable indicators. Concepts such as divine blessing, sincerity, and the common good are intangible and highly dependent on the subjective interpretations of individual actors; consequently, they cannot yet be

adequately measured using conventional instruments.

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