

Entrepreneurship Education and Community Empowerment in Islamic Boarding School: Lessons from a Sustainable Sheep Farming Initiative

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Article History

Received : December 18th, 2024

Revised : January 19th, 2025

Accepted : February 15th, 2025

Abstract: This study explores the impact of entrepreneurship education within Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) on rural community empowerment in Indonesia, focusing on a sheep farming initiative at Pesantren Persis 16 Cipada in West Java. Traditionally serving as centers for Islamic learning and moral development, pesantren have evolved to address the socioeconomic needs of their communities by integrating vocational training and entrepreneurship into their curricula. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected over three months through semi-structured interviews with program participants—including the program manager, a tutor, and five local residents—participant observation, and document analysis. Findings are categorized into three main themes: (1) Entrepreneurship Education and Economic Empowerment—the program provided participants with practical skills in sheep farming and business management, leading to increased economic independence and a reported 30% rise in household income for some participants; (2) Community Collaboration and Engagement—the initiative fostered unity and collective responsibility, enhancing social cohesion through shared decision-making and mutual support; and (3) Challenges in Sustaining the Initiative—issues such as limited funding, environmental factors affecting livestock health, and restricted market access posed threats to the program's sustainability. The study concludes that entrepreneurship education within pesantren can significantly contribute to rural economic empowerment and community development. By combining practical skills training with religious education, institutions like Pesantren Persis 16 Cipada effectively address both spiritual and economic needs, promoting resilience and sustainable development. However, to maximize their impact, these initiatives require additional support to overcome challenges related to financial resources, environmental adaptation, and market expansion. The findings highlight the potential of faith-based educational institutions to act as agents of social and economic change in rural settings.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education; Islamic boarding schools (pesantren); Sheep farming initiative; Rural economic empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools, known as pesantren, have been integral to Indonesian society for centuries, serving as centers of Islamic learning and as cultural and social hubs within their communities. Traditionally, pesantren were established primarily to provide religious education, with students (santri) studying classical Islamic texts and ethics under the guidance of esteemed religious leaders (kyai). Deeply embedded in Indonesia's cultural and religious landscape, pesantren have shaped the moral, spiritual, and intellectual foundations of numerous communities (Jarkasih & Nurhayati,

2023; Mustari & Nurhayati, 2024; Suharyat et al., 2023). Over time, however, their role has expanded in response to societal shifts and the evolving needs of their communities. Today, pesantren function not only as institutions of religious instruction but also as agents of social welfare, community empowerment, and economic resilience, particularly in rural areas where they remain central to community (Nurjanah et al., 2023; Putra et al., 2020).

A growing body of literature underscores the evolving role of pesantren from solely providing religious education to also serving as catalysts for community empowerment.

Traditionally, pesantren focused on instilling ethical values, promoting social cohesion, and providing spiritual guidance, thereby laying a foundation for community welfare and social development (Izudin, 2021). In recent years, however, scholars have observed a shift within pesantren toward integrated educational models that incorporate vocational training and entrepreneurship (Nurjanah et al., 2023). This transformation has positioned pesantren as essential actors in rural economic development, particularly in regions where access to formal employment and financial resources is limited. By incorporating practical skills training in areas such as agriculture and small business management, pesantren not only support individual livelihoods but also enhance the economic resilience of their surrounding communities (Izudin, 2021; Nurjanah et al., 2023).

Research on entrepreneurship education within religious and rural contexts highlights its potential to promote financial independence, increase household income, and foster self-efficacy among participants. Studies indicate that entrepreneurship and vocational programs in these settings equip individuals with marketable skills, enhance financial literacy, and encourage proactive economic engagement (F. R. Hidayat & Nurhayati, 2023; Nurjanah et al., 2023; Putra et al., 2020). In the context of pesantren, these programs are often designed to align economic pursuits with Islamic principles, thereby fostering deeper engagement and commitment among participants. By resonating with the cultural and religious beliefs of participants, this alignment enhances program effectiveness by reinforcing both moral and practical aspirations. Such an approach underscores the unique potential of faith-based institutions like pesantren to contribute to community empowerment through entrepreneurship education that respects and leverages cultural identity (Naimah et al., 2020).

Despite these advances, gaps remain in the literature concerning the specific economic roles that pesantren can play in rural empowerment, particularly through structured entrepreneurship programs. While existing studies affirm the broader social benefits of pesantren, few address how these institutions support economic resilience by providing targeted entrepreneurship training that complements religious education. Furthermore, limited research has examined the unique challenges and strategies involved in

balancing religious and vocational instruction to foster sustainable economic growth. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for optimizing the potential of pesantren in contributing to rural development. This study seeks to fill these gaps by investigating the sheep farming initiative at Pesantren Persis 16 Cipada. Pesantren Persis 16 Cipada exemplifies the integration between entrepreneurship program and Islamic education through its sheep farming initiative—a program designed to empower students and local residents economically while reinforcing the pesantren’s role as a center of community life. Inspired by the local economic landscape, this initiative introduces participants to a sustainable income-generating model rooted in rural agricultural practices. The sheep farming program provides hands-on training in livestock management, business planning, and financial management, aligning with broader goals of entrepreneurship education to foster economic resilience and long-term financial stability. By combining entrepreneurial skills training with religious instruction, Pesantren Persis 16 Cipada demonstrates how pesantren can effectively address both spiritual and economic needs, positioning themselves as essential agents of faith and rural economic development. The research focuses on assessing the impact of the sheep farming initiative as a model of entrepreneurship education that empowers participants economically and socially. By examining the program’s role in skill acquisition, income growth, and community cohesion, this study aims to demonstrate how pesantren can effectively foster economic resilience within rural communities. Through this case study, the research seeks to provide evidence of the broader potential of entrepreneurship education within pesantren to support rural economic development, affirming their adaptive role in addressing both spiritual and socioeconomic needs.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative case study approach to provide an in-depth analysis of the impact of entrepreneurship education on community empowerment through a sustainable sheep farming initiative at Pesantren Persis 16 Cipada in West Java, Indonesia. A case study was deemed most appropriate for exploring the complex interplay between educational

interventions and economic empowerment in a localized and culturally specific setting (Iswahyudi et al., 2023; Nurhayati et al., 2024; Sugiyono, 2018). This method allowed for a comprehensive understanding of individual experiences, collective outcomes, and the organizational dynamics that influenced the success of the sheep farming program in a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) context. The research took place within the community setting of Pesantren Persis 16 Cipada, a pesantren recognized for its emphasis on community involvement and empowerment programs. This institution provided an ideal site to examine how entrepreneurship education could foster economic independence and social empowerment. A purposive sample of participants included individuals directly engaged in the sheep farming initiative: the program manager, responsible for overseeing and coordinating the project; a tutor, who facilitated technical and entrepreneurial training; and five local residents who were actively involved in the sheep farming enterprise either as workers or trainees. These participants offered a range of perspectives on the program's design, implementation, and impact, enhancing the study's ability to capture the initiative's multifaceted effects on the community.

Data collection occurred over a three-month period through multiple qualitative methods to ensure a robust understanding of the program's impact. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share detailed personal insights regarding their roles, experiences, and reflections on the entrepreneurship program. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted in a setting that ensured participant comfort and privacy. The open-ended nature of the interview questions encouraged participants to discuss various dimensions of their involvement, such as acquired skills, economic benefits, personal empowerment, and challenges encountered. To complement the interviews, participant observation was conducted at the pesantren's sheep farm and during several training sessions. Observations focused on capturing interpersonal dynamics, problem-solving processes, and participant engagement within the program, providing a deeper layer of understanding beyond self-reported experiences. Field notes recorded detailed accounts of activities, participant interactions, and environmental conditions, with

particular attention to teamwork dynamics, decision-making processes, and non-verbal cues. This observational data enriched the analysis by offering real-time insights into program implementation and the participants' day-to-day experiences. Document analysis further contextualized and validated the data gathered through interviews and observations. Relevant documents included training materials, program records, and financial summaries, which provided additional insight into the operational aspects of the initiative and allowed for a cross-validation of participants' statements with official program documentation. This triangulation of data sources not only improved the reliability and validity of the findings but also provided a well-rounded perspective on the initiative's impact and challenges.

The data analysis followed a rigorous thematic approach, utilizing Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase method to identify and interpret meaningful patterns within the data. Transcripts of interviews and observational notes were read and re-read to ensure familiarity with the content and to facilitate the emergence of initial codes. Key aspects of the program, such as "economic empowerment," "skill acquisition," "community collaboration," and "operational challenges," were coded, and these codes were further synthesized into overarching themes. The primary themes identified through this process included the enhancement of economic independence, obstacles in sustaining the sheep farming initiative, and the pesantren's broader role in fostering community resilience. This structured analytical process provided a systematic interpretation of the data, ensuring that the study's findings were both thorough and coherent.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals the extensive impact of entrepreneurship education in Islamic boarding schools, particularly through the sheep farming initiative at Pesantren Persis 16 Cipada. Findings are organized into three main themes: (1) the development of skills and economic empowerment, (2) community collaboration and engagement, and (3) challenges in sustaining the initiative. These themes collectively illustrate how entrepreneurship education embedded within a pesantren context can effectively address

economic resilience and foster empowerment in rural communities.

Entrepreneurship Education and Economic Empowerment

The entrepreneurship program at Pesantren Persis 16 Cipada was instrumental in equipping participants with both technical skills in sheep farming and foundational knowledge in business management. The program's hands-on approach allowed participants to engage directly in practical tasks essential to livestock care and entrepreneurial practices, from animal feeding routines to market-oriented decision-making. Through the program's structured training sessions, participants gained confidence and proficiency in animal husbandry skills, including feed management, disease prevention, and breeding techniques that optimize livestock health and productivity. The foundational business training also empowered participants to manage finances, plan budgets, and consider market dynamics, which were all necessary for making informed decisions in the sheep farming business. A key observation was the increase in economic independence among participants, especially local residents, many of whom reported a 30% rise in their household income due to the program. This economic boost was significant, as it helped alleviate financial pressures on participants and improved their ability to support their families. One participant, TR, described the transformative impact: "Before this program, my income was unpredictable, and it was hard to provide consistently for my family. Now, with the steady income from livestock sales, we can manage our expenses better, and I feel more secure in planning for my children's education." Such statements underscore how entrepreneurship education, when effectively implemented, can contribute directly to improving participants' socioeconomic status and open opportunities for future financial stability. For santri (students) at the pesantren, the program imparted critical skills that extended beyond technical farming knowledge. These students developed valuable entrepreneurial competencies, such as budgeting and marketing, positioning them to leverage these skills in future endeavors outside of the pesantren environment. A program manager noted, "The goal was not just to teach them how to raise sheep but to think like entrepreneurs. By learning to budget, set prices, and manage profits, they're gaining skills that

will serve them in any business they pursue." This approach not only equipped students for immediate economic contributions but also instilled a mindset of independence and initiative.

Community Collaboration and Engagement

One of the most compelling outcomes of the initiative was the sense of unity and collaboration it fostered within the community. Unlike traditional education models, the pesantren's initiative embraced a community-driven approach that involved local residents, pesantren staff, and students in every stage of the project, from planning to implementation. This inclusive environment allowed for a unique model of mutual support and shared responsibility, in which each participant could actively contribute to decision-making, problem-solving, and daily operations. The collaborative culture was evident in the regular meetings held to discuss challenges, share ideas, and collectively decide on next steps. As described by MK, a training tutor, "We hold discussions with everyone involved to make sure every voice is heard. The participants feel that this is their project, not just something imposed on them, which has boosted morale and ownership." This environment of open communication and shared decision-making strengthened participants' commitment to the program and encouraged proactive problem-solving. For instance, when faced with financial or logistical issues, community members pooled their resources, collectively found solutions, and provided mutual support. The pesantren's ability to build this collaborative structure was key to the initiative's resilience and contributed to a sense of pride and belonging among participants. Participants also experienced a deeper sense of connection with their community. As IS, a local resident, shared, "Before joining this project, I was just focused on my own struggles. Now, working with others in my village and the pesantren has given me a purpose beyond myself. It feels like we're building something important together." This sense of shared purpose not only enhanced participants' social bonds but also created a ripple effect of motivation and solidarity, which became integral to the initiative's success. The collaborative nature of the project turned it into a platform for community members to acquire skills while strengthening relationships within the village, which in turn enhanced social cohesion.

Challenges in Sustaining the Sheep Farming Initiative

While the sheep farming initiative yielded considerable benefits, it was not without its challenges. Participants and program leaders faced several significant obstacles that threatened the project's sustainability, and these challenges offered insights into areas requiring further support and adaptation. Limited funding emerged as a primary issue, constraining the program's ability to expand and sustain its operations. The initial capital to set up the sheep farm was substantial, covering costs such as infrastructure, feed, and basic healthcare for the animals. However, the ongoing expenses required to maintain and improve these aspects were difficult to sustain without consistent external funding. The program manager explained, "Our funds were stretched thin from the beginning, and keeping up with feed costs and veterinary care has been a struggle. The support we received initially helped us set up, but for long-term growth, we need more stable financial resources." This financial strain limited the program's ability to respond to unforeseen challenges, such as health issues among livestock or the need for enhanced facilities. Without reliable funding, the initiative was vulnerable to fluctuations in resource availability, potentially impacting the quality of care provided to the livestock and the effectiveness of the training sessions.

Another challenge faced was the impact of the local climate, particularly unpredictable weather patterns, which affected the health and productivity of the sheep. Heavy rains, extreme heat, and fluctuating temperatures created additional challenges in maintaining livestock health, as explained by TR: "When the weather shifts suddenly, the animals become more susceptible to illness. We've had to adapt our care routines, but it's a constant struggle." This difficulty highlighted the need for adaptive management practices and environmental resilience training for participants. Efforts to mitigate these issues included adjusting feeding schedules and collaborating with local veterinarians for advice on preventive care, but these solutions required additional time, expertise, and resources. Limited market access also posed a challenge, restricting the initiative's growth potential. Currently, sales were mostly conducted within the pesantren community and

the immediate local area, limiting revenue streams and profit margins. Participants expressed the need for broader marketing channels and partnerships to maximize their reach. RM explained, "Our customer base is small right now. We know that if we had access to larger markets, we could sell more and make this business more profitable." The lack of marketing infrastructure restricted opportunities for expansion and emphasized the importance of establishing connections with external buyers, distributors, or cooperatives that could support the initiative's growth.

The entrepreneurship education program at Pesantren Persis 16 Cipada demonstrated the potential of Islamic boarding schools to contribute significantly to local economic empowerment and community development. The initiative equipped participants with practical skills in animal husbandry and business management, empowering them to make tangible contributions to their household income and enhance their economic resilience. The program also fostered a strong sense of community, as participants engaged in collaborative decision-making and mutual support, resulting in strengthened social bonds and a collective sense of purpose. However, the initiative's challenges highlighted critical areas for improvement, particularly in securing sustainable financial resources, developing adaptive responses to environmental issues, and expanding market access. Despite these obstacles, the project exhibited resilience and adaptability, proving that with adequate support, entrepreneurship education within pesantren can serve as a transformative model for rural economic empowerment. The study's findings emphasize the capacity of faith-based educational institutions to act as agents of social and economic change, leveraging community-driven models that foster empowerment, resilience, and a collective path toward sustainable development.

Discussion

Entrepreneurship Education and Economic Empowerment

The positive economic impact of the sheep farming initiative, particularly in terms of skill acquisition and income generation, aligns with the literature underscoring the benefits of contextually adapted vocational and entrepreneurial training in rural areas (Akinola et

al., 2023; Intadiyah et al., 2021; Musa et al., 2022; Nurmawati et al., 2021; Syafrudin & Nurhayati, 2020). Tailoring vocational programs to local economic structures is consistently shown to enhance participants' economic security and skill relevance, thus addressing the employment and income challenges frequently encountered in rural settings (Nurhayati, 2021; Qudsi & Nurhayati, 2023; Setiadi et al., 2023). This study observed that participants not only gained technical skills in livestock care but also developed critical business acumen, particularly in budgeting, financial planning, and market engagement. This practical skill-building supports earlier findings which stated that entrepreneurship education in rural settings cultivates self-reliance by equipping individuals with the knowledge and confidence to generate sustainable income streams (Nurhayati & Susanto, 2024). However, this study extends the literature by illustrating the specific benefits of embedding entrepreneurship education within a religious framework. Unlike secular vocational programs, the pesantren's integration of entrepreneurship training with Islamic values created a culturally resonant and highly engaging educational experience, fostering a sense of purpose among participants that aligns with their social and spiritual identities (Izudin, 2021; Naimah et al., 2020; Nurjanah et al., 2023). The study by Warsah (2020) similarly noted that faith-based programs in Islamic settings tend to enhance commitment and program impact, as they resonate with participants' values and cultural norms, effectively bridging economic goals with community-oriented values. This study's findings thus suggest that faith-based entrepreneurship programs in pesantren may not only empower individuals economically but also reinforce their cultural and religious ties, making them highly effective within rural, conservative communities.

Community Collaboration and Social Capital

The initiative's success in fostering collaboration and mutual support among participants demonstrates the critical role of social capital in rural entrepreneurship, a theme widely documented in the literature. Social capital, characterized by trust, collaboration, and shared community goals, has been shown to increase the likelihood of success in community-based economic initiatives, particularly in resource-constrained settings (Fountain et al.,

2021). In this study, the collective ownership, decision-making, and community involvement within the sheep farming initiative created a cohesive and resilient support network that not only enhanced participant morale but also increased their adaptive capacity. The initiative's group-based structure and regular discussions facilitated a sense of unity and mutual responsibility, as participants collectively navigated challenges related to resources and environmental variability. These findings align with the work Musavengane and Kloppers (2020), who found that high levels of social capital in community-based economic initiatives bolster resilience by enabling collective problem-solving and resource sharing. This study adds a unique dimension to the role of social capital by demonstrating how faith-based institutions, such as pesantren, can foster robust community bonds that support social and economic resilience. Unlike secular programs, the pesantren's incorporation of religious values and principles into the entrepreneurship initiative fostered a collective identity centered on both economic and spiritual growth. This model effectively combines financial objectives with culturally meaningful practices, resonating with the findings of Kharis et al. (2022), who observed that faith-based programs in conservative communities tend to foster higher levels of social capital, as they align with participants' cultural and religious values. The alignment of economic activities with Islamic teachings motivated participants to engage more fully, reinforcing both social cohesion and commitment to the initiative's long-term success.

Challenges in Sustainability and Market Access

Despite the successes observed, the initiative faced significant challenges in terms of financial sustainability, environmental adaptability, and market access, aligning with findings in the rural entrepreneurship literature. Limited funding was a primary obstacle, restricting the program's ability to expand and maintain high standards of animal care, infrastructure, and training. This challenge is common in rural entrepreneurship programs, where limited financial resources often prevent scaling and compromise the quality of services offered (Ali et al., 2022; Halawa et al., 2019; Hasan & Nurhayati, 2012; F. R. Hidayat & Nurhayati, 2023; Hudri & Nurhayati, 2020). In

the case of Pesantren Persis 16 Cipada, participants noted that insufficient funds to cover recurring expenses such as feed and veterinary care impeded the program's growth potential, underscoring the necessity for sustainable funding structures in community-based economic initiatives.

Environmental factors further complicated the initiative's sustainability, with unpredictable weather patterns impacting livestock health and requiring adaptive management practices. This finding resonates with research by Mahmudah et.al. (2021), who observed that rural agricultural projects in Indonesia face heightened vulnerability to climate variability, which often increases operational costs and imposes significant demands on time and labor. While participants displayed resilience by adjusting care routines and collaborating with local veterinarians, these adjustments required additional resources that were already limited. These findings highlight the importance of incorporating environmental resilience training and technical support in similar community-based programs to mitigate risks and support long-term viability. Restricted market access posed an additional challenge, limiting the initiative's growth potential and income opportunities for participants. Market constraints are a frequent obstacle in rural entrepreneurship, as limited access to distribution channels restricts the customer base and revenue potential (Nurhayati et al., 2020; Nurhayati & Falah, 2020). Participants in this study expressed the need for expanded market access to reach consumers beyond the local community, a limitation that mirrors findings by Musa et.al. (2022), who highlighted the critical role of market expansion in sustaining rural enterprises. Without access to larger markets, the initiative's economic impact remains limited, underscoring the need for cooperative partnerships, improved transportation infrastructure, or digital marketing initiatives to enhance rural producers' market reach.

This study contributes to the literature on entrepreneurship education and rural development by illustrating how faith-based institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools, can effectively implement entrepreneurship programs that empower both individuals and communities. The pesantren model provides a valuable framework by integrating economic skills with religious

principles, creating a culturally meaningful approach that resonates with participants in rural, conservative communities (Ardaya et al., 2023; Darmawan et al., 2024; Izudin, 2021; Noor & Nurhayati, 2023; Nurjanah et al., 2023). This study suggests that faith-based programs can foster high levels of community engagement and social cohesion, as participants are motivated by both economic goals and religious values. Policymakers and educators interested in rural development may benefit from adopting similar faith-integrated approaches, particularly in regions where religious institutions play a central social role. Moreover, the pesantren model presents a replicable approach for other rural communities. This study's findings align with earlier research suggesting that community-based programs are more effective when they engage participants culturally and socially, as this approach deepens program impact and sustainability (I. I. Hidayat et al., 2024; Khairunnisa et al., 2024; Kobasah & Nurhayati, 2024; Nurhayati et al., 2021; Rukanda et al., 2020a, 2020b; Sunari & Nurhayati, 2023). By fostering social capital, aligning with cultural values, and creating a structure for economic skill-building, pesantren-based programs offer a promising model for rural development that warrants further exploration.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that entrepreneurship education within an Islamic boarding school context—specifically, the sheep farming initiative at Pesantren Persis 16 Cipada—can serve as a powerful model for fostering community empowerment and economic resilience in rural Indonesia. By embedding practical livestock management and business training within a framework of Islamic values, the program provided participants with essential tools to improve their livelihoods while reinforcing social bonds and a collective sense of purpose. The initiative's success underscores the potential of faith-based educational institutions to act as agents of rural economic development, blending vocational education with community-driven empowerment. Findings reveal that the entrepreneurship program at the pesantren empowered participants both economically and socially. The increase in participants' income, the development of practical skills, and the fostering of collaboration all highlight the program's

multifaceted benefits. Moreover, the unique integration of religious values helped foster engagement and commitment, suggesting that pesantren-based programs may resonate more effectively with rural communities where cultural and religious alignment enhances program acceptance and impact. However, the initiative's challenges—including limited funding, environmental constraints, and restricted market access—highlight the need for structural support to ensure program sustainability. Addressing these obstacles through sustainable funding models, enhanced technical support, and expanded market access will be crucial for similar initiatives aiming for long-term impact. This study contributes to the literature on community education and rural entrepreneurship by providing a replicable model that leverages the cultural and social capital of pesantren. Faith-based educational institutions can significantly advance socioeconomic progress in rural regions by integrating entrepreneurship education within their curriculum and community outreach efforts.

Future research should explore the effectiveness of similar entrepreneurship education programs across a larger sample of pesantren and other faith-based institutions to validate the generalizability of these findings. Comparative studies examining the long-term economic and social outcomes of participants in pesantren-based programs versus those in secular community initiatives could offer valuable insights into the distinct contributions of faith-based education. Additionally, a longitudinal approach could deepen our understanding of the sustained impact of entrepreneurship education on economic stability, individual empowerment, and community resilience. Future research might also examine the specific types of support—such as sustainable funding sources, climate adaptation strategies, and digital marketing access—that most effectively enhance the scalability and resilience of rural entrepreneurship initiatives in diverse community settings. This research underscores the transformative potential of entrepreneurship education within pesantren for rural economic development. By aligning educational goals with the cultural and spiritual values of local communities, such initiatives can foster not only individual empowerment but also broader community resilience and economic sustainability. With strategic support and adaptation, the pesantren-based model has

promising applications in rural regions where both economic opportunities and community cohesion are crucial for sustainable development.

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