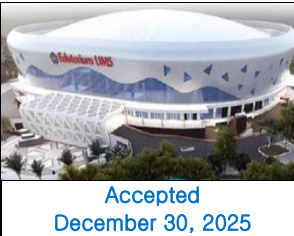
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Pesantren Enterprises: How Religious Institutions Drive Business Ecosystem Growth and Contribute to SDGs

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to analyze the economic transformation of Islamic boarding schools through case studies of Sidogiri Islamic Boarding School and Idrisiyyah Islamic Boarding School, as well as identify the success factors of integrating religious values and modern business management. **Theoretical framework:** This research uses the concepts of Islamic economics, community empowerment, and social entrepreneurship that emphasize the integration of spiritual values with professional business management. **Literature review:** The literature shows that pesantren not only function as religious educational institutions, but also develop into centers for community-based economic empowerment and social entrepreneurship. **Method:** The study used an instrumental comparative case study approach by comparing the economic transformation of the Sidogiri Islamic Boarding School and the Idrisiyyah Islamic Boarding School. **Results:** The results of the study show that the two Islamic boarding schools have succeeded in developing various community-based business units. This success is supported by the kyai-santri relationship, the concept of solemnity, spiritual values, and community loyalty. **Implications:** Pesantren have great potential as agents of economic empowerment and sustainable development that support the achievement of the SDGs, especially poverty alleviation and inclusive economic growth. **Novelty:** The novelty of this research lies in the analysis of the integration of religious traditions and modern business management in the economic development of pesantren and its contribution to the SDGs in Indonesia.

Keywords: pesantren, business ecosystem, islamic economics, sdgs, community empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) represent the largest social entrepreneurship institutions in Indonesia [1]. This claim appears well-founded when considering the substantial number of pesantren, which has reached approximately 41,220 institutions nationwide. However, a critical question arises: to what extent have pesantren in Indonesia actively engaged in economic activities? Traditionally, pesantren have been established as non-profit institutions; yet, they simultaneously function as entities that receive and manage waqf (Islamic endowments), positioning them as asset-developing organizations that potentially foster economic growth [2]. As charitable organizations, pesantren are often perceived as lacking a strong business orientation. Nevertheless, it is increasingly evident that many pesantren have begun to manage business ventures and generate substantial profits. This emerging phenomenon calls for a more systematic scholarly inquiry to examine the transformation of pesantren in Indonesia, particularly in relation to their evolving economic orientation [3].

Studies on pesantren in Indonesia over the past five decades can be broadly mapped into three major foci. First, scholarship has examined the historicity of pesantren, the centrality of the kiai (religious leader), and the role of these institutions in socio-political transformations. Second, attention has been directed toward the socio-educational functions of pesantren. Third, recent studies have explored the dynamics and transformations of pesantren in the modern era. Among these three strands, the socio-educational role of pesantren has received the most sustained scholarly attention [4].

Pesantren have long been recognized as an indigenous model of Islamic education in the Indonesian archipelago, deeply rooted in local traditions, distinctive pedagogical characteristics, and a strong system of knowledge transmission. As such, they have significantly shaped the trajectory of modern national education, spanning primary, secondary, and higher education levels [5].

Educational reform within pesantren began to gain momentum in the 1970s, marked by collaborations between several pesantren and the LP3ES, driven largely by the need for community empowerment. These reforms primarily targeted the domains of education and intellectual development [6]. Consequently, pesantren have evolved from being institutions solely dedicated to the study of Kitab Kuning (classical Islamic texts) into more comprehensive educational institutions that also incorporate modern sciences, comparable to general schooling systems.

Educational reforms within pesantren have simultaneously stimulated transformations in the economic sphere, particularly as these institutions increasingly engage with general sciences, including economics and business-related skills. Over the past three decades, scholarly works on the economic development of pesantren can be broadly categorized into two major tendencies [7].

The first focuses on the role of pesantren in fostering the socio-economic empowerment of communities. This line of inquiry has been underway since at least the 1970s, when pesantren began collaborating with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in community development programs. These studies consistently conclude that kiai and pesantren have played a significant role in facilitating social change, particularly in navigating the transition toward modern forms of social life [8].

Historically, the influence of pesantren extends even further back to the colonial centers of political socialization and as key reference points for local communities [9]. A pivotal moment in strengthening the community empowerment role of pesantren was the establishment of the Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat (P3M) in 1983. This initiative marked a significant milestone in advancing community development across various dimensions of life, with the broader aim of promoting national intellectual and socio-economic well-being [10].

The second strand of scholarship focuses on the development of diverse economic ventures within pesantren and their implications for both institutional and community-level economic self-reliance. This research demonstrates a significant expansion in the operational domains of pesantren, encompassing various economic activities such as maritime enterprises, agribusiness, cooperative institutions (koperasi pondok pesantren), fisheries, garment production, and other small- and medium-scale industries [11].

Within this analytical framework, studies on pesantren economics have generally remained descriptive, primarily concerned with identifying the range of economic ventures, examining their management practices, and assessing their overall impact in broad terms. However, over the past decade, there has been a noticeable shift toward more analytical and theoretical inquiries [12]. Recent studies have begun to explore the underlying sources of competitive advantage in pesantren-based economic enterprises, particularly those grounded in the ukhuwah-based business model, which emphasizes solidarity and

communal ties as well as the capacity of pesantren communities to compete with dominant modern economic systems, notably capitalism [13].

Nevertheless, despite the growing body of scholarship on pesantren economics, or the notion of the “economic pesantren”, limited attention has been devoted to the development of comprehensive business economic ecosystems within pesantren, particularly in the context of the rapidly expanding digital economy. This gap suggests the need for a more integrative analytical framework [14]. The present study argues that by examining the constituent elements and interconnected units within the value chain, it is possible to identify both the primary determinants and the supporting factors that shape the success of pesantren-based economic enterprises [15].

It is further hypothesized that the systematic development of a pesantren economic ecosystem will reinforce the role of these institutions as key drivers of community economic welfare, positioning them as strategic actors in advancing broader socio-economic development. In this regard, pesantren may function not only as educational and religious institutions but also as economic locomotives that contribute meaningfully to the realization of social welfare objectives at the national level.

On the policy front, the Indonesian government, through institutions such as the Kementerian Koordinator Bidang Perekonomian, the Kementerian Keuangan, and Bank Indonesia, has initiated various programs aimed at expanding economic development within pesantren. These initiatives include efforts to strengthen economic ecosystems and to promote integration with the digital economy, thereby providing an enabling environment for the transformation and scaling up of pesantren-based enterprises.

Studies on the development of pesantren business ecosystems have been undertaken by several scholars. Research by Wulandari et al. identifies key ecosystem elements that influence the digitalization of startups within Pesantren Tebuireng. The study delineates ten stages in the development of startup digitalization, highlighting *sowan*, a culturally embedded practice of seeking guidance and legitimacy from religious authorities, as the most critical step. This stage is subsequently followed by processes such as securing financial resources, business establishment, marketing, order acquisition, procurement, production, sales and complaint management, technological development, business expansion, and conflict resolution [16].

In another publication, Wulandari and Subriadi further examine the role of each ecosystem element during the early stages of startup development. Their findings map the positioning and function of ecosystem components throughout the growth trajectory of startups more generally. Such insights are particularly valuable for pesantren leadership in designing strategies for startup market creation, to reduce failure rates during the critical early years of business development [17].

The economic resilience of pesantren constitutes a critical foundation for the sustainability of their broader economic ecosystems. One notable example of such an ecosystem, examined by Ali et al., is the *Himpunan Ekonomi dan Bisnis Pesantren* (Hebitren), particularly in the Yogyakarta region in 2021. The establishment of Hebitren at both national and regional levels, initiated by Bank Indonesia, is intended to enhance the economic contribution of pesantren institutions. This initiative promotes the transformation of business model ideas toward the development of inter-pesantren holding companies, envisioned as key drivers of the community-based Islamic economy.

For pesantren administrators, participation in Hebitren offers multiple strategic benefits, including access to feedback and the transfer of knowledge related to business models, business planning, and budgeting (RAPB), the formulation of standard operating procedures, financial reporting systems, organizational structuring and job descriptions, the mapping of prospective Hebitren managers, and the identification of core business sectors to be developed [18].

Research by Nurkhin on pesantren economics primarily focuses on institutional accountability. The study reveals a substantial body of literature addressing financial management in pesantren, including accounting practices, financial reporting, governance structures, and accountability within Islamic organizations. Importantly, this research underscores that pesantren implement a dual accountability framework, encompassing both responsibility to God and accountability to society [19]. Meanwhile, Rusdan places greater emphasis on the economic self-reliance of pesantren. His study is structured around three key concerns: first, the urgency of strengthening pesantren economic independence; second, the challenges and opportunities associated with this process; and third, the strategic measures that pesantren must undertake to enhance their economic autonomy [20].

A review of the existing body of research reveals a significant gap, particularly in the limited emphasis on identifying the value-chain components of pesantren business ecosystems and the absence of a systematic explanation of their interrelations. Accordingly, there is a clear need for more comprehensive studies that examine the pesantren economic ecosystem alongside the forms of relationships that structure it. Such an approach would enable a more precise mapping of pesantren business networks, thereby uncovering patterns that demonstrably generate financial benefits and contribute to the sustained growth of pesantren-based economic ecosystems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) have long been recognized as influential institutions in Indonesian society, serving not only as centers of religious education but also as agents of social transformation and community development. In recent decades, the role of pesantren has expanded beyond traditional educational functions toward economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. This transformation reflects the growing capacity of pesantren to integrate religious values with modern organizational and business practices, enabling them to contribute significantly to local and national economic development. The concept of pesantren-based economic development is closely associated with community empowerment. Pesantren possess unique social capital derived from strong relationships among kiai, santri, alumni, and surrounding communities. These relationships create networks of trust, loyalty, and cooperation that facilitate the establishment and sustainability of economic enterprises. Through these networks, pesantren are able to mobilize resources, strengthen community participation, and promote inclusive economic growth [20].

Previous studies have highlighted the emergence of pesantren as centers of social entrepreneurship. Unlike conventional business organizations that prioritize profit maximization, pesantren enterprises often pursue broader social and spiritual objectives. Economic activities are designed not only to generate income but also to support educational programs, improve community welfare, and strengthen institutional independence. This dual orientation toward economic sustainability and social responsibility distinguishes pesantren-based enterprises from many other business models. The development of business ecosystems within pesantren has attracted increasing scholarly attention. A business ecosystem refers to a network of interconnected actors, institutions, and resources that collaborate to create value and support economic activities. Within pesantren environments, these ecosystems typically involve cooperatives, retail businesses, financial institutions, production units, alumni networks, and community partners. Such interconnected structures enable pesantren to diversify their economic activities and expand their social impact [20].

Another important theme in the literature concerns the role of religious values in business management. Islamic principles such as trustworthiness, service, sincerity, moderation, and social responsibility are frequently embedded within organizational cultures and operational practices. These values contribute to the formation of ethical business models that balance economic objectives with spiritual commitments. Consequently, pesantren

enterprises often demonstrate high levels of community trust and stakeholder engagement. Despite the growing body of research on pesantren economics, significant gaps remain regarding the mechanisms through which business ecosystems are developed and sustained. Existing studies often focus on specific business units or community empowerment initiatives rather than examining the broader ecosystem dynamics. Therefore, further research is needed to explore how religious institutions integrate social capital, spiritual values, and professional management to build resilient business ecosystems that contribute to sustainable development and long-term community welfare [21].

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative method with an instrumental comparative case study approach [21], focusing on two pesantren in West and East Java, Pesantren Sidogiri and Pesantren Idrisiyah, which share similar characteristics, particularly the establishment of pesantren-based business ecosystems. These ecosystems encompass holding company structures, santripreneurship, alumni acting as economic agents, and extensive external business networks.

The instrumental case study design was selected to uncover the underlying dynamics of unique social phenomena, including doctrinal values, normative frameworks, mental attitudes, habitual practices, cultural patterns, and the distinctive characteristics embedded within specific communities [22]. Primary data were collected through participant observation and in-depth interviews conducted over six months, involving managers of the holding companies within the pesantren as well as selected partners from their business networks.

The criteria for ensuring data rigor in this study encompass credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Confirmability is established through peer debriefing and by cross-checking findings with multiple data sources [23].

In the data analysis process, the study employs member checking and theoretical triangulation. Member checking is conducted by validating the findings with research participants, while triangulation involves comparing and testing the results against alternative theoretical frameworks and additional empirical data sources to ensure analytical robustness and consistency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The development of pesantren economic self-reliance plays a strategic role in strengthening the foundations of the national economy. Advancing pesantren-based business and financial systems through a modern management approach requires at least three key preconditions: resilience and perseverance, the strengthening of business networks, and the enhancement of knowledge and economic empowerment through the Halal Value Chain Ecosystem [24].

Among the prominent examples of pesantren that have successfully developed sustainable and independent business economies are Pesantren Sidogiri and Pesantren Idrisiyah. Both institutions have demonstrated significant progress by expanding into various sectors of modern business, reflecting their capacity to integrate traditional religious values with contemporary economic practices [25].

A business ecosystem, defined as a community of interdependent and interacting business actors, constitutes a crucial foundation for the development of pesantren-based enterprises. According to James F. Moore, a business ecosystem comprises three interrelated layers: the core business, business expansion, and the broader ecosystem layer [26].

In the contemporary era, the formation of an effective and adaptive business ecosystem has become increasingly essential, including within the context of pesantren economic

activities. Although such enterprises often originate on a relatively small scale, their growth significantly elevates the strategic importance of the surrounding economic ecosystem [27]. This ecosystem functions as a critical support structure for the expansion and sustainability of pesantren holding companies, ultimately positioning it as an integral component of overall economic advancement and institutional success.

Business Ecosystem Development Strategy of Pesantren Sidogiri

Pesantren Sidogiri, located in Pasuruan, East Java, was established in 1745 by Sayyid Sulaiman, a grandson of Sunan Gunung Jati. It is widely recognized as one of the oldest pesantren in Indonesia. Despite its strong adherence to the traditions of pesantren salaf (classical Islamic boarding school traditions), Sidogiri has progressively developed a wide range of business units managed in a professional manner, forming what can be conceptualized as a pesantren-based holding company [28].

The governance of these business entities is centrally coordinated under the leadership of the pesantren, supported by a clear and well-structured organizational system. Such a management framework ensures that all business operations remain aligned with the normative and ethical values of the pesantren [29]. At the same time, the pesantren leadership retains full authority to intervene in strategic decisions and the management of all business units whenever necessary, thereby maintaining coherence between economic activities and institutional principles.

Pesantren Sidogiri has developed an extensive business network across multiple sectors and regions, including East Java, Pontianak, Bali, and beyond. Initially, its economic activities were established to fulfill the daily needs of its students (santri). Over time, these initiatives gradually expanded in scale and scope, evolving into a comprehensive economic system that now serves as a national benchmarking reference for pesantren-based economic development [30].

The primary driving force behind this economic expansion is the Kopontren Sidogiri, founded in 1961 by K. H. Sa'doellah Nawawie. The cooperative began as a modest small-scale shop but has since undergone significant institutional transformation. Following its formal legal incorporation in 1997, Kopontren Sidogiri experienced rapid growth and development, establishing numerous business units that are managed professionally while remaining under the strategic control of the pesantren leadership [31].

The expansion of economic enterprises within Pesantren Sidogiri has been carried out in a sustained and incremental manner. Initially driven by the need to meet the growing demands of an increasing number of santri, a small retail shop was established in 1961 by K. H. Sa'doellah Nawawie. Over time, this modest enterprise was gradually expanded and diversified.

During the 1990s, efforts were undertaken to institutionalize these economic activities through the establishment of the Kopontren Sidogiri. On July 17, 1997, the cooperative was formally granted legal status under registration number 441/BH/KWK/13/VII/97, with membership initially limited to the pesantren community. In the same year, in collaboration with a bottled water company, the cooperative began producing bottled drinking water (AMDK) under the brand “Santri.”

Subsequent developments further expanded the scale and reach of these enterprises. In 2007, the original retail shop was significantly enlarged through the establishment of retail and wholesale outlets outside the pesantren complex, specifically along Wonosari Road, approximately 13 kilometers from the main campus. By 2009, the cooperative had broadened its membership base to include alumni, parents of santri, sympathizers, and the wider community, thereby strengthening its economic network and social embeddedness.

The trajectory of economic development in Pesantren Sidogiri demonstrates a progressive transformation from small-scale retail activities, which began with Toko

Basmalah, into a more complex structure resembling a holding company comprising four limited liability companies (PT). Toko Basmalah, as the primary retail unit under Kopontren Sidogiri, has expanded significantly and currently operates more than 262 minimarkets across East Java, West Kalimantan, and Bali. This network serves as a central pillar of the pesantren's economic system. Basmalah provides essential goods through a supply chain model that connects directly with producers via regional agents, thereby enhancing efficiency and competitiveness.

In addition to the retail sector, Pesantren Sidogiri manages bottled drinking water (AMDK) under the "Santri" brand. Initially developed to meet internal consumption needs, this product has since been commercialized and distributed to the wider market. Furthermore, the pesantren has ventured into financial technology through the development of e-maal, a digital payment system (e-money) implemented within the pesantren environment. This innovation aims not only to modernize financial transactions but also to promote financial discipline and reduce consumptive behavior among santri.

The concept of an extended enterprise within the business ecosystem of Toko Basmalah encompasses multiple layers of interaction, including direct customers, second-tier customers, and upstream suppliers (direct customers, customers of our customers, and suppliers of our suppliers). Beyond serving the essential needs of end consumers, Toko Basmalah actively supports small retail shops as strategic partners by providing managerial assistance and facilitating direct distribution access from producers. This arrangement enables partner stores to reduce operational costs while maintaining competitive pricing in the market.

A notable innovation in the development of Toko Basmalah is the utilization of a digital platform available on the Google Play Store under the name Mitra Kopontren Sidogiri. The application carries the tagline "easily managed investment in accordance with Sharia principles," reflecting its alignment with Islamic economic values. Through this platform, individuals can apply to become partners or investors, subject to a verification process conducted by the management team. This digital integration further strengthens the scalability and inclusiveness of the pesantren business ecosystem.

Within its business ecosystem, Toko Basmalah offers investment opportunities to the broader community through a mudharabah (profit-sharing) partnership scheme for the establishment of new branches. Each proposed collaboration undergoes a rigorous feasibility study conducted by the pesantren's business unit to assess viability, profit potential, and competitive positioning.

To prevent capital concentration and ensure broader community participation, Kopontren Sidogiri imposes a maximum investment limit of IDR 200 million per investor. This policy not only mitigates the risk of monopoly but also encourages inclusive economic engagement. Community participation in such investment schemes fosters a strong sense of attachment and ownership (sense of belonging), which in turn cultivates customer loyalty toward Toko Basmalah. Furthermore, all investors are formally registered as members of Kopontren Sidogiri, whose membership has now grown to exceed 7,000 individuals, encompassing not only the pesantren community but also the wider public.

With its rapid development, Pesantren Sidogiri has successfully established four limited liability companies (Perseroan Terbatas), reflecting the institutionalization and diversification of its business ecosystem:

1. PT Sidogiri Mitra Utama, operating in the distribution sector through retail and wholesale networks under the brand Toko Basmalah;
2. PT Sidogiri Mandiri Utama, engaged in the manufacturing sector, producing bottled drinking water (AMDK) under the "Santri" brand;

3. PT Sidogiri Pandu Utama, focusing on human resource development and information technology infrastructure services; and
4. PT Sidogiri Fintech Utama, operating in the digital payment sector, with its flagship product being the electronic money platform e-maal.

The establishment of these entities illustrates a strategic expansion from traditional community-based economic activities toward a more integrated and professionally managed corporate structure within the pesantren framework.

Business Ecosystem Development Strategy of Pesantren Idrisiyah

Pesantren Al Idrisiyyah, strategically located along the Tasikmalaya–Bandung corridor in West Java, serves as a central hub of the Idrisiyyah Sufi order (tarekat) in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. While Sufism and tarekat traditions are often perceived as being distant from economic engagement, Pesantren Al Idrisiyyah demonstrates the contrary by emerging as one of the leading centers of pesantren-based economic development in both West Java and Indonesia.

The Tarekat Idrisiyyah, introduced by Syekh Akbar Abdul Fattah, exhibits notable parallels with the Tarekat Sanusiyyah of North Africa, which is historically recognized for its social movements and resistance to colonial domination. This ideological and historical foundation contributes to shaping the socio-economic orientation of Pesantren Al Idrisiyyah, integrating spiritual discipline with active participation in economic and social transformation [32].

Syekh Akbar Abdul Fattah was the first mursyid (spiritual guide) of the Tarekat Idrisiyyah in Tasikmalaya. He received spiritual authorization (ijazah) from his teacher, Syekh Ahmad Syarif As-Sanusi, at the zawiyah of Jabal Abu Qubais in Mecca. Syekh Ahmad Syarif As-Sanusi was directly affiliated with Syekh Muhammad Al-Mahdi, who in turn was a disciple of Syekh Muhammad ibn Ali as-Sanusi.

Initially, Syekh Akbar Abdul Fattah propagated his teachings under the name of the Tarekat Sanusiyyah. However, due to political considerations during the Dutch colonial period, the designation was subsequently changed to the Idrisiyyah order. His leadership spanned from 1932 to 1947, after which it was succeeded by his son, Syekh Akbar Muhammad Dahlan, whose tenure extended from 1947 to 2000, encompassing the Old Order, New Order, and the early Reformasi era.

Subsequently, leadership passed to Syekh Akbar Muhammad Daud Dahlan (2000–2010), who introduced the concept of Divine Bureaucracy (Birokrasi Ilahiyah). Since 2010, the order has been led by Syekh Akbar Muhammad Fathurohman.

On June 18, 2018 (4 Shawwal 1439 H), an organizational restructuring resulted in the establishment of the Majelis Ketarekat (MK). This reform strengthened the institutional framework of the Idrisiyyah order by integrating modern organizational professionalism with the spiritual teachings of the Thariqah Rasulullah, paralleling the model historically implemented within the Sanusiyyah order.

The Majelis Ketarekat (MK) constitutes the core institutional structure of the tarekat movement, directing all organizational programs while emphasizing the normative values of Sufism and tarekat teachings. The MK is led by a Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer, and is supported by several specialized divisions. These include the Dewan Ulum Shufiyah, which focuses on research and scholarly writing on Sufism; the Dewan Tarbiyah Sulukiyah, responsible for the teaching of Sufi doctrines and the spiritual guidance of disciples; and the Dewan Dakwah dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan, which oversees the follow-up of the mursyid's preaching, develops collaborative outreach initiatives, and promotes the Tarekat Idrisiyyah to the broader public [33].

Economic development within Pesantren Idrisiyah originated from the need to serve the daily requirements of santri and the wider jamaah, initially facilitated through small-scale retail shops. In 1986, a cooperative (koperasi pondok pesantren) was established to manage savings and loan services. During the monetary crisis, this cooperative adapted its function by operating similarly to a pawnshop, engaging in the buying and selling of auctioned goods to expand its retail capacity. This transformation eventually led to the establishment of Qini Mart, a minimarket chain that has since experienced significant growth. Supported by the leadership of the pesantren and the Idrisiyyah jamaah, the development of pesantren-based economic enterprises continues under the coordination of the cooperative, Kopontren Fathiyyah Idrisiyyah.

Over time, Pesantren Idrisiyah has evolved into a robust center of the Idrisiyyah order, not only within West Java but also across the Indonesian archipelago and Southeast Asia. The increasing number of santri and jamaah has intensified the demand for sustainable economic development. In response, the pesantren has adopted the concept of an extended enterprise, encompassing direct customers, second-tier customers, and upstream suppliers. The Qini Mart network exemplifies the successful implementation of this approach. Local communities, as primary consumers of daily necessities, form the core customer base, supported by strong emotional and spiritual ties to the pesantren and the mursyid of the Idrisiyyah order.

During the leadership of Syekh Akbar Muhammad Fathurohman since 2010, two foundational principles have been institutionalized within Pesantren Idrisiyah: Divine Management (Manajemen Ilahiyyah), which emphasizes the strengthening of worship and spiritual values, and Professional Management (Manajemen Profesional), which prioritizes efficiency and professionalism in organizational and business governance. This dual approach has produced a balanced integration between the spiritual (inner) and material (outer) dimensions across various sectors, including economic activities. Consequently, the pesantren has developed business units not merely for profit generation but as instruments for embodying Islamic values, promoting sustainable da'wah, and advancing economic self-reliance and community welfare. This framework helps explain the sustained and rapid growth of its economic enterprises.

Within the context of its business ecosystem, the strong relational bonds among santri, alumni, and the jama'ah of the Tarekat Idrisiyyah have formed a cohesive socio-economic force that functions both as a driving axis and a binding agent. This collective cohesion significantly shapes the development of both social and commercial economic activities within the pesantren. Under the coordination of Kopontren Fathiyyah Idrisiyyah, a diverse range of business units has been established and expanded. These include BMT Idrisiyyah, Qini Mart and Qini Center (minimarket and commercial hub), Qini Vaname (shrimp aquaculture), Depo Qini (fisheries), Qini Minang (restaurant), plantation ventures, MSME-based retail outlets (Warung UKM), the Asosiasi Pengusaha Idrisiyyah (API), as well as umrah travel services.

Beyond the commercial sector, the pesantren has also expanded into socio-economic initiatives, including Agniya Care, Sufi Training Center programs, legal aid institutions, and family development services aimed at promoting social welfare. These initiatives further illustrate the integrative model of pesantren-based development, where spiritual, social, and economic dimensions are mutually reinforcing.

With its notable achievements in business and economic development, Pesantren Idrisiyah was selected as one of the representatives of West Java Province to participate in the 7th OIC Halal Expo and the 5th World Halal Summit held in Istanbul, Turkey, in November 2019. This participation was facilitated through the One Pesantren One Product (OPOP) program, alongside several other prominent pesantren, including Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid, Pesantren Al-Ittifaq, Pesantren Al-Ashriyyah, and Pesantren Husnul Khatimah.

These five institutions were designated as pilot models for 1,074 other pesantren participating in the OPOP initiative.

The development of pesantren-based business activities is closely aligned with broader national programs aimed at strengthening Islamic economic and financial ecosystems. These initiatives are promoted by institutions such as the Kementerian Koordinator Bidang Perekonomian, state-owned enterprises (BUMN), the Ministry of Finance, and Bank Indonesia. A central policy concern lies in how the business excellence demonstrated by leading pesantren can be disseminated to other institutions, thereby generating wider economic impact. Programs such as OPOP in West Java exemplify this effort to scale and replicate successful pesantren business models.

Pesantren Idrisiyah has experienced rapid business expansion, with total assets reaching approximately IDR 40 billion by 2021. Its business portfolio spans multiple sectors, including the Qini Mart minimarket network, clean water enterprises, shrimp aquaculture, agribusiness, real estate, modern poultry farming, and plantation industries. The Qini Mart network is widely distributed across Tasikmalaya and other regions in Indonesia, while modern poultry farms are located in areas such as Ciamis and Karawang. The geographical spread of these business units corresponds closely with the expansion of the pesantren's economic influence and the growing membership of the Tarekat Idrisiyyah.

Historically, this economic development originated from the establishment of a pesantren cooperative (kopontren) in 1982, which later expanded its operations through the creation of Waserda Idrisiyyah in 1985 as a general retail store. In 2003, this enterprise evolved into Qini Mart, which subsequently adopted a convenience store model in 2007. Over time, the Qini Mart network has continued to expand across multiple regions, reflecting the sustained growth of pesantren-managed business enterprises.

The trajectory of business expansion at Pesantren Idrisiyah has unfolded under successive leadership of the mursyid of the Tarekat Idrisiyyah, beginning with Syekh Akbar Abdul Fattah (1932–1947), followed by Syekh Akbar Muhammad Dahlan (1947–2000), and Syekh Akbar Muhammad Daud Dahlan (2000–2010). Since 2010, leadership has been held by Syekh Akbar Muhammad Fathurohman. The most significant phase of business development has occurred across these leadership periods, with a consistent emphasis on expanding and consolidating the pesantren economic ecosystem.

The expansion strategy is further reinforced by the implementation of a value chain approach that integrates tarekat values into corporate culture and work ethics. One of the key factors underpinning this success is the application of the principle of *zuhud* (ascetic moderation) among employees, encouraging them to pursue material success as a means of attaining divine approval (*ridha* Allah), rather than as an end in itself. Employees are expected to engage in regular *dhikr* and *wirid* during their work routines and to participate in ongoing religious instruction, thereby aligning professional activities with higher spiritual objectives and fostering a sense of ethical commitment and blessing (*barakah*) in their work [34].

Performance enhancement at Pesantren Idrisiyah is pursued through disciplined daily coordination practices, notably the implementation of structured morning briefings at 08:00. These briefings function as a managerial forum for identifying operational challenges and formulating solutions, thereby accelerating the achievement of organizational targets. In addition, employee performance is reinforced through the flexible practice of tarekat rituals. The schedule of individual *wirid* (litanies) is not rigidly prescribed by the mursyid but is instead adapted to each individual's daily routine and personal preference, allowing for a more integrative balance between spiritual practice and professional responsibilities [35].

The second strategic approach involves strengthening the sense of fraternity among alumni of Pesantren Idrisiyah. Alumni and internal members are given priority in recruitment for managerial and staff positions within pesantren-affiliated enterprises. This

strategy not only reinforces social cohesion but also enhances the expansion of business networks through trust-based relationships [36]. A comparable model can be observed in other pesantren, such as Pesantren Al-Ittifaq and Pesantren Darussalam Ponorogo, which similarly leverage alumni networks as a strategic economic resource.

The third strategy entails granting managerial autonomy to corporate executives, particularly CEOs, to develop business ventures creatively without direct intervention from the mursyid. While the broader organizational framework is guided by the concept of Divine Bureaucracy (Birokrasi Ilahiyah), corporate management is conducted professionally and rationally, balancing efficiency with spiritual objectives [37]. In this context, success is not solely measured by financial profit but also by the attainment of barakah (blessing). One tangible manifestation of this principle is the provision of subsidies for santri, enabling relatively low monthly fees, approximately IDR 400,000, partially supported by contributions from various pesantren-affiliated business units.

Comparative Analysis of the Two Pesantrens

Pesantren Sidogiri and Pesantren Idrisiyah represent two prominent Islamic educational institutions that have demonstrated significant capacity in developing and managing independent business economies through distinct and context-specific approaches [38]. Both institutions function not only as centers of education and da'wah, but also as economic hubs that foster institutional self-reliance, enhance community welfare, and generate broader socio-economic impacts.

1. Core Business

The two pesantren exhibit different orientations in their core business strategies, reflecting their respective visions and institutional trajectories. Pesantren Sidogiri is characterized by a holding company model that integrates multiple business units, with Toko Basmalah serving as the backbone of its economic system. As an extensive retail network, Toko Basmalah has evolved into a major economic driver for both the pesantren and the surrounding community, operating more than 262 minimarkets across East Java, West Kalimantan, and Bali. In addition to retail distribution, Sidogiri has diversified into bottled drinking water production under the "Santri" brand, human resource development, information technology infrastructure, and digital payment services.

In contrast, Pesantren Idrisiyah has developed a more diversified core business portfolio, encompassing Qini Mart, BMT Idrisiyyah, agribusiness, fisheries, real estate, and modern poultry farming. Qini Mart, which originated as a small retail shop, has grown into one of the primary economic pillars of the institution, with branches distributed across Tasikmalaya and its surrounding regions. This diversification reflects a dynamic entrepreneurial orientation that is closely integrated with pesantren-based values and socio-religious commitments.

2. Extended Enterprise

In terms of extended enterprise, Pesantren Sidogiri and Pesantren Idrisiyah demonstrate distinct approaches in expanding their economic impact. Pesantren Sidogiri adopts a more structured and system-driven model by integrating small retail shops as strategic partners through the Mitra Kopontren Sidogiri platform. This mechanism provides managerial support and direct distribution access from producers, thereby enhancing efficiency and competitiveness. In addition, Sidogiri offers community-based investment opportunities through a mudharabah (profit-sharing) scheme to facilitate the expansion of Toko Basmalah branches.

Conversely, Pesantren Idrisiyah develops an extended enterprise model that is more community-oriented, actively engaging santri, alumni, and the jamaah of the Tarekat Idrisiyyah. Qini Mart functions as the central node within this ecosystem, providing essential goods to the community while being reinforced by strong socio-spiritual bonds

between the pesantren and its followers. This approach not only strengthens business performance but also cultivates deep loyalty and long-term engagement among its stakeholders.

3. Business Ecosystem

The business ecosystems developed by both institutions reflect their respective organizational values and cultural orientations. Pesantren Sidogiri emphasizes the expansion of a broad and professionally managed business network. Initially rooted in meeting the internal needs of santri, its economic activities have expanded to encompass regions such as East Java, Kalimantan, and Bali. This ecosystem is sustained by multiple business units operating under coordinated management structures while remaining aligned with pesantren values.

In contrast, the business ecosystem of Pesantren Idrisiyah is profoundly shaped by Sufi and tarekat teachings, which embed spiritual principles into every aspect of economic activity. The strong relational ties among santri, alumni, and jamaah generate an ecosystem that extends beyond purely economic functions to include social and spiritual development. The integration of tarekat values serves as a foundational element in Idrisiyah's business expansion, ensuring that economic growth remains harmonized with its spiritual doctrines.

Overall, this comparative analysis demonstrates that although Pesantren Sidogiri and Pesantren Idrisiyah employ different strategies and focal areas, both have successfully integrated religious education with modern business management. Their experiences illustrate how pesantren can evolve into autonomous economic centers, making substantial contributions to the welfare of their communities while maintaining their foundational religious and cultural identities.

Hidden Capitals as Determinants of Pesantren Enterprise Success

The rapid growth of business activities in Pesantren Sidogiri and Pesantren Idrisiyah raises a critical analytical question regarding the types of capital that underpin their success and distinguish pesantren-based economic systems from conventional economic models.

This study finds that the success of Pesantren Sidogiri in developing its business ecosystem is closely linked to the presence of hidden capital—intangible yet highly influential resources—comprising three mutually reinforcing dimensions:

1. Traditional Kiai–Santri Relations

The close and enduring relationship between kiai (religious leaders) and santri constitutes a foundational pillar in the economic development of Pesantren Sidogiri. This relationship is characterized by a high degree of trust, loyalty, and obedience on the part of the santri, enabling effective coordination and harmonious management of business activities. Both santri and alumni perceive themselves as bearing a moral responsibility to support the pesantren, not only in its educational mission but also in its economic enterprises. The kiai is regarded as a figure of profound spiritual and moral authority, whose guidance shapes both ethical conduct and organizational direction.

This deeply rooted relational structure, embedded within the broader pesantren tradition, plays a pivotal role in sustaining institutional cohesion and significantly contributes to the success of various business units managed by the pesantren.

2. The Concept of Khidmah (Service)

The concept of khidmah, or service, represents a fundamental value cultivated within Pesantren Sidogiri. In this context, khidmah extends beyond purely spiritual devotion to encompass active participation in the pesantren's economic and business activities. Santri are taught that contributing to institutional enterprises—such as working in Toko Basmalah or other business units—constitutes an integral form of worship and service to the pesantren.

This ethos of khidmah is not confined to current students but is also strongly internalized among alumni who are dispersed across various regions. As a result, alumni function as dynamic agents in expanding and sustaining the pesantren's economic network. The internalization of khidmah fosters a high level of loyalty and dedication among both santri and alumni, which in turn becomes a critical factor in ensuring the continuity, resilience, and success of the pesantren's business enterprises.

3. Integration of Traditional Values into Business Management

Within Pesantren Sidogiri, business management is inseparable from the direct supervision and guidance of the kiai as the supreme institutional authority. The kiai holds full prerogative in determining the strategic direction of business development, ensuring that all economic activities remain aligned with the normative framework of the pesantren. Each business unit operates in accordance with deeply rooted traditional values, reflecting the principle that the pesantren belongs to the community and is dedicated to the collective welfare (maslahah).

Consequently, business management at Sidogiri is not solely oriented toward economic efficiency but also toward safeguarding the integrity of Islamic values in every dimension of economic practice. This approach is reinforced by a strongly coordinated organizational structure grounded in enduring relational networks among kiai, santri, alumni, and the broader community. Such cohesion has generated a stable and supportive institutional environment, enabling the expansion of diverse business ventures while preserving the pesantren's identity as a traditional Islamic educational institution.

The success of economic development at Pesantren Sidogiri cannot be separated from the strong relational nexus among kiai, santri, and alumni, which is further reinforced through the institutionalization of khidmah—*khidmatun lil ma'had wa khidmatun lil ummah* (service to the institution and to the wider community). These values ensure that all business activities remain aligned with the religious and cultural principles of the pesantren, thereby fostering a business model that is not only economically viable but also deeply embedded in the ethical and socio-religious ethos of the Indonesian archipelago.

In contrast, the success of Pesantren Idrisiyah in developing its economic ecosystem is underpinned by three principal forms of embedded capital:

1. The Tarekat System and Sufi Teachings

Pesantren Idrisiyah operates under the framework of the Tarekat Idrisiyyah, which profoundly shapes its approach to business management and development. The Sufi teachings that constitute the core of this order emphasize spiritual values such as *zuhud* (ascetic moderation) and *ikhlas* (sincerity), which are systematically integrated into all aspects of organizational practice [39]. Employees and santri are encouraged to orient their work toward attaining divine approval (*ridha Allah*), rather than merely pursuing material gain. This principle cultivates a work culture characterized by integrity, discipline, and high levels of commitment, ultimately contributing to the sustainability and success of the pesantren's economic enterprises.

2. Spiritual Bonding between Jama'ah and Santri

The emotional and spiritual attachment of the jama'ah and santri to the tarekat constitutes a powerful foundation for the pesantren's economic success. Followers who are spiritually connected to the mursyid demonstrate strong loyalty, which is translated into tangible support for pesantren-affiliated businesses [40]. For instance, many members of the jama'ah become consistent consumers of Qini Mart and actively participate in other business sectors such as shrimp aquaculture and agribusiness. This support is not limited to economic transactions but also reflects a broader sense of social responsibility, wherein members perceive the advancement of the pesantren's economy as an extension of their spiritual devotion.

3. The Culture of Zuhud and Professionalism

The Sufi teachings implemented at Pesantren Idrisiyah promote not only simplicity in lifestyle but also a strong ethos of professionalism in work practices. Santri, alumni, and employees are encouraged to embody Sufi values in their daily lives, including within their professional roles. By integrating Divine Management (*Manajemen Ilahiyyah*) with modern professional management, the pesantren has succeeded in establishing a business ecosystem that is both competitive and spiritually grounded. This balance between spiritual orientation and business objectives enables the pesantren's enterprises to achieve sustained growth while maintaining ethical coherence [41].

In sum, the tarekat system, Sufi teachings, and the deep-rooted loyalty of jama'ah and santri function as key determinants in the economic success of Pesantren Idrisiyah. The synergistic integration of spiritual values and professional business management has produced a resilient and sustainable economic ecosystem.

Table 1. Comparative Hidden Capitals as Determinants of Pesantren Enterprise Success

Hidden Capitals	Pesantren Sidogiri	Pesantren Idrisiyah
Relational Capital	Strong traditional kiai–santri relationships based on trust, loyalty, and obedience, creating stable institutional cohesion	Strong spiritual bonding between jama'ah, santri, and the mursyid, fostering deep loyalty toward the pesantren
Service Capital	The concept of <i>khidmah</i> (service), in which participation in pesantren enterprises is viewed as a form of worship and devotion to both the institution and society	A spiritual ethos of service to Allah and the tarekat, encouraging jama'ah to actively support the pesantren's economic activities
Leadership Capital	The kiai functions as the highest authority in determining business strategies while ensuring alignment with pesantren values.	The mursyid acts as a spiritual leader who shapes organizational culture and work orientation
Value Capital	Integration of traditional pesantren values and the principle of <i>maslahah</i> into all business practices	Internalization of Sufi values such as <i>zuhud</i> (moderation), <i>ikhlas</i> (sincerity), and orientation toward attaining <i>ridha Allah</i>
Network Capital	Santri and alumni networks serve as the primary force in expanding and sustaining the pesantren's economic ecosystem.	The tarekat jama'ah functions as a socio-economic network that supports the sustainability of pesantren enterprises.
Professional–Spiritual Capital	Business management is conducted in a coordinated manner while preserving the pesantren's religious and traditional identity.	Integration of Divine Management (<i>Manajemen Ilahiyyah</i>) with modern professionalism, creating a competitive yet spiritually grounded business ecosystem

The table demonstrates that the economic success of both Pesantren Sidogiri and Pesantren Idrisiyah is fundamentally supported by forms of hidden capital embedded within their religious, social, and cultural structures. While Sidogiri's economic model is primarily grounded in traditional kiai–santri relations, the institutionalization of *khidmah*, and community-based networks, Idrisiyah emphasizes the role of Sufi spirituality, tarekat-based loyalty, and the integration of Divine Management with professional business practices [42]. Despite their different institutional orientations, both pesantren illustrate how intangible

religious and socio-cultural resources can function as strategic capital in developing resilient, sustainable, and ethically grounded economic ecosystems.

Pesantren-based economic ecosystems: Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The findings of this study demonstrate that pesantren-based economic ecosystems contribute significantly to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the context of inclusive economic development, social welfare, and sustainable community empowerment in Indonesia. Through the integration of religious values, social solidarity, and modern business management, Pesantren Sidogiri and Pesantren Idrisiyah have evolved beyond their traditional educational roles into transformative socio-economic institutions.

1. Contribution to SDG 1: No Poverty

The business ecosystems developed by both pesantren contribute directly to poverty reduction by creating employment opportunities, expanding microeconomic activities, and strengthening local economic resilience. Business units such as Toko Basmalah, Qini Mart, agribusiness ventures, fisheries, and cooperative enterprises provide income-generating opportunities for santri, alumni, surrounding communities, and small-scale entrepreneurs. The profit-sharing investment schemes and community-based business networks also enable wider economic participation among lower- and middle-income groups [\[43\]](#).

Furthermore, the pesantren economic model emphasizes social welfare and redistribution rather than profit maximization alone. Subsidized educational costs for santri, social assistance programs, and community empowerment initiatives illustrate how pesantren enterprises function as instruments for reducing economic vulnerability and supporting marginalized communities.

2. Contribution to SDG 4: Quality Education

The transformation of pesantren into economically independent institutions strengthens their educational sustainability. Revenues generated from business units support educational operations, infrastructure development, scholarships, and student welfare programs. Economic self-reliance reduces dependence on external funding and enables pesantren to maintain affordable access to education [\[44\]](#).

In addition, both pesantren integrate entrepreneurial values, managerial skills, and practical economic experiences into the broader educational environment. Santri are exposed not only to religious learning but also to organizational management, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and digital economic practices. This integration contributes to the development of human capital equipped for contemporary socio-economic challenges.

3. Contribution to SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

The study highlights how pesantren enterprises stimulate inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The expansion of retail networks, fintech systems, agribusiness, fisheries, and manufacturing activities has generated productive employment opportunities while strengthening regional economies [\[45\]](#).

Pesantren Sidogiri and Pesantren Idrisiyah also promote ethical economic practices grounded in Islamic values such as honesty, fairness, trustworthiness, moderation, and social responsibility. Their business ecosystems demonstrate that economic growth can be pursued alongside moral and spiritual commitments. The integration of professional management with religious ethics contributes to the creation of sustainable and socially responsible business models.

4. Contribution to SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

The pesantren business ecosystems reveal substantial innovation in institutional and economic development. Pesantren Sidogiri, for instance, has adopted digital payment technologies through e-maal fintech services and digital partnership systems via the Mitra Kopontren platform. These innovations modernize traditional pesantren economies while increasing efficiency, financial inclusion, and business scalability [46].

Similarly, Pesantren Idrisiyah has developed integrated value chains connecting retail, agriculture, fisheries, and community-based enterprises. Such innovations strengthen local economic infrastructure and demonstrate how religious institutions can participate actively in technological adaptation and economic modernization.

5. Contribution to SDG 11: Sustainable Communities

Both pesantren contribute to the development of resilient and sustainable communities through social cohesion, ethical economic practices, and community-centered business models. Their enterprises are deeply embedded within local social structures and prioritize collective welfare over purely individual profit. The strong relational networks among kiai, santri, alumni, and jamaah create social capital that reinforces economic stability and mutual support [47].

Moreover, pesantren-based enterprises encourage local production, community participation, and regional economic circulation, thereby strengthening local resilience against external economic shocks.

6. Contribution to SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

The success of pesantren economic ecosystems is also supported by strategic partnerships involving government institutions, financial authorities, cooperatives, business actors, and broader community networks [48]. Programs initiated by Bank Indonesia, the Ministry of Finance, and regional economic initiatives such as One Pesantren One Product (OPOP) demonstrate the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in advancing pesantren-based economic development.

CONCLUSION

The economic development trajectories of Pesantren Sidogiri and Pesantren Idrisiyah demonstrate how traditional Islamic educational institutions can transform into significant centers of business and economic power. The comparative analysis of these two cases reveals several key findings that underpin their success in building independent and sustainable business ecosystems. First, both institutions have successfully integrated traditional and spiritual values with modern business management practices. At Pesantren Sidogiri, business governance is conducted under the direct supervision of the kiai, ensuring that all economic activities remain aligned with Islamic and pesantren values. The institutionalization of khidmah (service) within business practices has fostered strong loyalty and dedication among santri and alumni, which in turn serves as a critical driver of economic success. In contrast, Pesantren Idrisiyah bounds its economic development in Sufi teachings derived from the Tarekat Idrisiyyah, emphasizing principles such as zuhud (ascetic moderation) and ikhlas (sincerity). These values orient business activities toward both material sustainability and spiritual fulfillment, while the strong emotional bond between jama'ah and the mursyid provides a robust foundation for institutional support and loyalty. Second, the business ecosystems developed by both pesantren illustrate that Islamic education and economic enterprise can operate synergistically. Pesantren Sidogiri has established an extensive business network through units such as Toko Basmalah, which functions as the backbone of its economic system. Meanwhile, Pesantren Idrisiyah has diversified its business portfolio across sectors, including retail, agribusiness, fisheries, and real estate, supported by the active participation and loyalty of santri and jama'ah. Third, the success of both institutions is reinforced by the adoption of modern technologies and managerial approaches. Pesantren Sidogiri, for instance, has introduced financial

technology innovations such as digital payment systems (fintech) to modernize financial transactions across its business units. Conversely, Pesantren Idrisiyah employs an extended enterprise model that actively involves its community in the business ecosystem, thereby strengthening both social cohesion and economic resilience. Overall, these findings indicate that pesantren can function as autonomous and sustainable economic locomotives, extending beyond their traditional roles as educational institutions to become influential contributors to regional economic development and community welfare. The economic performance of both institutions has also contributed to increasing local government revenue (Pendapatan Asli Daerah). The strategic combination of traditional values, modern business management, and robust economic ecosystems emerges as the key determinant of their success. The economic model exemplified by Pesantren Sidogiri and Pesantren Idrisiyah offers a valuable framework for other pesantren in Indonesia seeking to develop their economic potential. By adapting to contemporary developments and fostering innovation—while maintaining their spiritual and cultural foundations—pesantren can play an increasingly significant role in advancing national economic development and enhancing societal welfare. Finally, this study demonstrates that the development of pesantren-based business ecosystems contributes not only to institutional economic independence but also to the broader achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through the integration of religious values, social solidarity, and modern business management, Pesantren Sidogiri and Pesantren Idrisiyah contribute to poverty reduction, educational sustainability, inclusive economic growth, technological innovation, and community empowerment. Their business models illustrate how Islamic educational institutions can function as sustainable socio-economic actors that strengthen local welfare while maintaining ethical and spiritual foundations. Consequently, pesantren enterprises offer an alternative model of culturally rooted and socially inclusive development that can support national economic transformation and sustainable development in Indonesia.

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Author Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the main contributor to this paper. All authors read and approved the final paper.

Conflicts of Interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

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