


# Optimizing the Economic Independence of Sharia-Based Islamic Boarding Schools

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| <p><b>Submitted:</b><br/>September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023</p> <p><b>Revised:</b><br/>February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b><br/>March 04<sup>th</sup>, 2024</p> <p><b>Published:</b><br/>May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024</p> <p><b>By:</b><br/>International Journal<br/>of Islamic Economics<br/>(IJIE)</p> <p><b>Copyright:</b><br/>©2024. Mustofa Anwar</p>  <p>This article is licensed<br/>under the Creative<br/>Commons Attribution-<br/>Share Alike 4.0<br/>International License<br/><a href="http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/">http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/</a></p> | <p><b>Introduction:</b> The independence of Islamic Boarding Schools is a necessity because pesantren can be seen through the process of establishing pesantren which usually uses Kiyai's funds and assistance from the surrounding community. The irony is that there are still many pesantren that still depend on the injection of outside funds.</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b> This study aims to find out how business strategies are applied to the Islamic Boarding School of Darul A'mal Lampung to accelerate the economic independence of sustainable Islamic Boarding School.</p> <p><b>Method:</b> By using qualitative research methods and case study approaches (<i>field research</i>). Data were obtained through direct observation, and in-depth interviews with related parties (Foundation administrators, heads of cottage business units, teachers, and students).</p> <p><b>Results:</b> The findings in this study are steps to optimize the pesantren business that can be done to realize the independence of pesantren optimally by strengthening pesantren management, optimizing existing business potential, expanding cooperation, and opening public spaces in terms of business, improving the ability of human resources in sharia-based business management.</p> <p><b>Implications:</b> This study reaffirms the steps that can be taken to optimize the independence of pesantren through strengthening pesantren management, equalizing the perceptions of all pesantren stakeholders about the vision and mission of pesantren, together continuing to learn by providing training, as well as implementing policies well and followed by in-depth evaluation on an ongoing basis. So that the results of this research can be used as a reference for optimizing the pesantren business in realizing sustainable pesantren independence.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Economic Independence; Islamic Boarding School; Optimization of Business; Sharia Business Management.</p> |

## A. Introduction

Islamic Boarding School usually called Pesantren is the oldest Islamic educational institution that has the uniqueness, independence, and haste of the archipelago (Ma'arif et al., 2023). The independence of Pesantren can be seen through the process of establishing Pesantren which usually uses Kiyai's funds and assistance from the surrounding community. It is very rare and almost no Islamic boarding school in the past that received funding from

the government (Mahdi Adnan, 2013). This shows that pesantren are independent institutions that contribute significantly to the progress of the nation (Naimah et al., 2020). However, the rapid development of the times requires pesantren to continue to innovate and carry out developments, especially in the business field to be able to survive and compete in facing the challenges of the global world. Field facts show that not a few pesantren do not yet have economic independence due to a lack of focus and optimization in running the pesantren business.

Studies with similar themes have been carried out by several researchers including research on Business Development Models and Strategies with the object of research Pesantren Modern Subulussalam Padang Pariaman conducted by Harahab and Syarif using a qualitative approach and using SWOT analysis (Harahap et al., 2022). Research on the independence of pesantren was conducted by Muheramtohadhi with a review of the assets and operations of pesantren (Muheramtohadhi et al., 2022). Maya and Lubis examined what factors affect the independence of pesantren conducted at Pesantren al-Ittifaq in Bandung (Maya Silvana & Lubis, 2021). Research on a strategy to build a pesantren business conducted by Yaqin and Muhtadin in Pesantren Nurul Jadid through centralization of fashion demand (Yaqin & Muhtadin, n.d.). The difference between this research and previous research is the focus of the research and the object of research carried out.

The focus of this study is an analysis of efforts to optimize the pesantren business and the inhibiting factors of optimizing the pesantren business from a Sharia economic perspective to complete the space that has not been touched in previous studies. The location of the research was carried out on the largest Pesantren-owned business entity in Metro City, namely Pesantren Darul A'mal Metro Lampung. The purpose of this study is to determine the application model of optimizing the pesantren business as an effort to accelerate the independence of sustainable pesantren. So, it is hoped that the results of this research can be useful both theoretically and at a practical level and can be used as an effort to accelerate the independence of pesantren on an ongoing basis.

## B. Literature Review

### Economic Independence of Pesantren

Independence is a behavior that shows the ability to overcome problems independently without dependence on something (Riadi et al., 2021). The independence of pesantren aims to realize pesantren that have strong and sustainable economic resources so that they can carry out the functions of education, da'wah, and community empowerment optimally without relying on other parties (Maya Silvana & Lubis, 2021). Thus, the strategic objective of the policy is to strengthen the function of pesantren in producing superior human resources, both in religious science, work skills, and translation. Other functions are strengthening pesantren in managing business units as economic resources and strengthening pesantren as community economy as well as strengthening the role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in realizing the pesantren independence program (Putri et al., 2021).

Indicators of pesantren are said to have independence in the economy are: When the results of the business unit have a positive contribution on an ongoing basis to the learning and operational activities of Pesantren so that the operation of the pesantren does not depend on the Syariah student or donations from other parties (Naimah et al., 2020). Some business clusters that can be applied as Islamic boarding school business units are SME Cooperatives and Sharia Economics, Agribusiness, agriculture, animal husbandry, *Halal Food and Beverage Cluster*, *Muslim Fashion Cluster*, *Halal Pharmaceuticals and Cosmetics Cluster*, *Halal Media and Recreation Cluster*, *Renewable energy* (Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning, 2019). In addition, the agricultural and livestock sector as well as Islamic boarding school cooperatives (KOPONTREN) are the most suitable business fields considering that the purpose of cooperatives is to prosper members (Mi'raj et al., 2023).

Steps that can be taken to achieve the progressivity of pesantren independence, namely; *First*, implement modern management. *Second*, establishing a Pesantren business unit (Entrepreneurship). *Third*, carry out training. And *fourth*, creating an *economic network* (Hamdan Farchan & Syarifudin, 2005). Pesantren business management is needed to strengthen the economic sector of Pesantren. There are several economic strategies of pesantren as an effort to strengthen the economy of pesantren as expressed by Ahmadi, including; The value and soul of pesantren, waqf as an investment in the afterlife, maximizing resources in pesantren, and maximizing the economy independently (Maulidiyah & Hasib, 2023) (Arifin & Purnamasari, 2022). Asih Subagyo explained several keys to success so that the independence of pesantren can be realized: Waqf regulation, waqf understanding, support from various parties (government, pesantren, and teacher), Nadzir professionalism, pesantren policy, investment strategy, collaboration and empowerment of *mauquf 'alaih* (Solihatin et al., 2021).

### **Sharia Business Management**

Management has a significant and positive influence on well-being (Yusup & Si, n.d.) Broadly speaking, there are at least four main activities in management, including; planning, organizing, implementing supervising, and evaluating. In Islam, every management process is based on the main sources of Islamic teachings, namely the Qur'an and al-Sunnah to seek the pleasure of Allah (Solihatin et al., 2021). So that the orientation of the business that is run is not only oriented to worldly profits. However, having an afterlife orientation is an effort to get Rida from Allah (worship).

To achieve maximum goals, a Pesantren business institution must be able to develop these four main activities as best as possible (As-Salafiyah & Slamet Rusydiana, 2022). Conducting strategy management consisting of *strategy formulation* (Vision-Mission, internal and external assessment, strategy in action, analysis, and choice), *strategy implementation* (implementation management, budgeting, marketing, etc.), and *strategy evaluation* (review, assessment, and control of the business). In Sharia management, supervision has a very important role in keeping Sharia business within Sharia principles (Triwibowo et al., 2022) (Faizah & Aisyah, 2023). Supervision in Islam is transcendental, which will radiate inner discipline. Islamic management also views external supervision as having a very important

role, considering that humans are often tempted to commit actions that are contrary to the values and morals of Sharia (Chamidi, 2023).

### C. Research Methodology

This research uses a field study with a qualitative approach that focuses on strategic steps to optimize the pesantren business as an effort to accelerate the independence of sustainable pesantren. This study involved 10 active participants who had a direct relationship with the pesantren business. This research begins with the presentation of an extensive literature review to describe related themes in the literature. Furthermore, in June 2023, a series of preliminary observations were conducted to validate the interview guidelines to be used in in-depth interviews with respondents.

Over a span of three months, a total of 10 interviews were conducted, involving many informants representing various aspects. These categories consist of 1) A dedicated administrator of Yayasan Pesantren Darul A'mal, whose duty is only to oversee the operations of the Pesantren Business and is given full authority to manage the store; 2) Cooperative managers who manage cooperatives in Darul A'mal Pesantren; 3) Teacher who owns shares in the Darul A'mal Pesantrens business unit; 4) Employees who participate in managing the pesantren business unit; 5) Santri as consumers who interact with the pesantren business unit. In addition, the study expanded its scope by combining data derived from online sources, including platforms such as YouTube and online media that display content related to pesantren business.

The collected data is further analyzed with an analytical approach, which includes several main stages. These stages include data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. Data reduction involves the selection and categorization of relevant information related to the research objectives. Furthermore, the data is presented visually through tables and fed into narrative quotes, while maintaining the original context and essence of the data. To increase the robustness and credibility of data, a triangulation process is used, which cross-references data from multiple sources. This structured data is then analyzed through three main methods: representation, description, and interpretation. Restatement involves restating the informant's statement, including excerpts of interviews to convey the perspectives and insights of the stakeholders of the pesantren business unit. The interpretation phase gives meaning to the business development strategy pursued by pesantren business managers through a comprehensive content analysis approach. These meticulous analytical stages collectively serve as a foundation for drawing meaningful conclusions from research findings (Hamzah, 2019).

### D. Results and Discussion

Pesantren Darul A'mal is one of the oldest and largest Pesantren in the city of Metro Lampung, which focuses on religious character education and *kutubussalaf* (classics) and complements it with general education (AA, personal communication, 2024). Education at the pesantren Darul A'mal does not only focus on religious education alone but also studies other social sciences such as economics and entrepreneurial skills (*santri preneur*) so that it can be said that the pesantren Darul A'mal instills an understanding of the balance of life in the

world and the hereafter (AB, personal communication, 2024). Pesantren Darul A'mal always builds economic independence and eliminates dependence on outsiders. Independence means the ability to be able to overcome problems independently without dependence (Ghai, 1973). To realize pesantren that have strong and sustainable economic resources so that they can carry out the functions of education, da'wah, and community empowerment optimally without relying on other parties (Indah, 2021; Maya Silvana & Lubis, 2021).

The process of pesantren independence has been implemented since the beginning of the establishment of the Darul A'mal Pesantren as described by the informants above (BB, personal communication, 2024). The process of realizing independence continues to be pursued by improving the management of pesantren management. The management of business management in the Darul A'mal Pesantren is under the management of the Darul A'mal Foundation (CB, personal communication, 2024). This is following the steps to achieve the progressivity of pesantren independence, namely implementing modern management. (Hamdan Farchan & Syarifudin, 2005). The change in management from traditional to modern aims to strengthen the economic sector of pesantren. So that it can maximize the vision and mission of pesantren and maximize existing resources for economic independence (Fuad Ahmadi, 2021).

The business unit run in the pesantren of Darul A'mal is run traditionally and simply. Based on observations made by researchers, the pesantren of Darul A'mal's business unit is run in an organized and institutionalized manner through a registered cooperative body. The above description describes the educational and business operations of Darul A'mal under the auspices of the Darul A'mal Foundation. In addition to supervising, the Foundation also conducts managerial organization coaching so that each executive post can run optimally. The profits obtained from the pesantren business unit are used for land expansion costs and the construction of Darul A'mal.

One form of business that is widely developed by Pesantren is cooperatives. Almost all pesantren that have schools/madrasahs establish cooperatives as business units. The types of cooperatives run are quite diverse, ranging from savings and loan cooperatives to consumption cooperatives and so on. Pesantren Darul A'mal Lampung under the auspices of the Darul A'mal Foundation also developed a business unit in the form of a cooperative, namely the Mulyojati Berkah Makmur Consumer Cooperative. Until now, the pesantren business unit owned by Pesantren of Darul A'mal is still limited to the Mulyojati Berkah Makmur Consumer Cooperative and in agriculture in the form of managing melon plants using greenhouses and corn plantations covering an area of three hectares. When viewed from the business potential that can be developed, this is still fairly not optimal because there are still many business units that can be developed. Among the business units that can be further developed are the development of sharia cooperatives, agribusiness, agriculture, animal husbandry, *Halal Food and Beverage Cluster*, *Muslim Fashion Cluster*, *Halal Pharmaceuticals and Cosmetics Cluster*, *Halal Media and Recreation Cluster*, *Renewable energy* (Ariatin et al., 2022; Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning, 2019).

Mulyojati Berkah Makmur Consumer Cooperative is one of the business units engaged in saving and borrowing and buying and selling. The existence of cooperatives apart from being a source of income for Pesantren is also a place to improve the economy of members consisting of teachers, staff, and employees. Through savings and loan services, members can deposit and simultaneously apply for loans without having to use collateral like when borrowing at other financial institutions. So this is considered easier for members. However, in its operations, this cooperative still uses a conventional system by applying an interesting system. As an Islamic institution, it would be better if cooperative operations began to switch to using a profit-sharing system. As an effort to minimize differences in views around the law of interest.

Another business unit under the Mulyojati Berkah Makmur Consumer Cooperative is Toko Rital MBM Mart selling various daily necessities to meet all the needs of ustadz/teachers, administrators, and students of Pesantren Darul A'mal. The initial assets owned by MBM Mart amounted to 75 million and until now have grown to 200 million (CA, personal communication, 2024). The location of MBM Mart is outside the pesantren with a distance of approximately 1,000 m from the pesantren. The results of the researchers' observations found that buying and selling transactions at MBM Mart were still relatively low. This is in line with the results of an interview with the manager of MBM Mart who said that the average turnover per day reached 3 million Rupiah or Rp. 90 million per month (CB, personal communication, 2024).

The turnover can be maximized if you see the considerable market potential of MBM (Pesantren Darul A'mal has 2,850 active students). And when compared to competitors (other retailers) nearby, the location is still quite far away. For example, Indomart in one day averaged a turnover of 7 million. So far, MBM Mart's income still depends on teachers, staff, and employees who are required to shop every month. This can be seen from the statement of MBM Mart employees that at the beginning of each month, MBM Mart's turnover increases significantly because teachers, staff, and employees use shopping vouchers deducted from their salaries. The amount varies from Rp. 50 thousand to Rp. 500 thousand per member.

Reports from informants show that consumer interest from the students is still very minimal. Santri prefers to shop at shops/stalls that are located close to the cottage. In this case, MBM Mart can expand its role as a supplier of goods for shops/stalls and canteens around the cottage and those in the cottage so that it will increase the turnover of MBM Mart. MBM Mart can also be a supplier of all new and old student needs ranging from uniforms, school equipment shoes, bags, books, and books as well as providing mattresses and cabinets and other needs (CB, personal communication, 2024).

The management of the pesantren business in Pesantren Darul A'mal always takes accelerated steps by continuing to innovate and improve in all sectors to optimize the realization of pesantren independence. Modern business management is used to accelerate the realization of sustainable economic independence of pesantren, with the meaning that it is expected that the pesantren business can continue to run throughout the opening period only temporarily. The acceleration effort can be seen from the steps that have been taken by

the Darul A'mal Pesantren, namely: conducting comparative studies in various Islamic boarding schools that have good pesantren business management such as Pesantren sidogiri and Pesantren Sunan drajat; attending training on pesantren business management; Cooperate with various parties such as banks and government institutions in the field of pesantren business; Conduct coordination and evaluation meetings at the beginning of each month. This is by the findings of Hamdan et al, to achieve managerial progressiveness, things that need to be done, namely; *First*, implement modern management. *Second*, establishing a pesantren business unit by Entrepreneurship. *Third*, carry out training. And *fourth*, creating an *economic network* (Hamdan Farchan & Syarifudin, 2005).

In addition, broadly speaking there are at least four main activities in management, including; planning, organizing, implementing supervising, and evaluating (Ricky W. Griffin, n.d.). To achieve maximum goals, a Pesantren business institution must be able to develop these four main activities as best as possible. By conducting strategy management consisting of *strategy formulation* (Vision-Mission, internal and external assessment, strategy in action, analysis, and choice), *strategy implementation* (management, budgeting, marketing), and *strategy Evaluation* (Review, scoring dan control Usaha) (Fred R. David, 2011).

Supervision and evaluation are an important part of achieving business goals that are on target and do not contradict Sharia. Supervision is carried out periodically every month to ensure the business is run as expected. So pesantren business activities are not only oriented to world profits but also oriented to the hereafter (value of worship). Islamic management also views external supervision as having a very important role, considering that humans are often tempted to commit actions that are contrary to the values and morals of Sharia. So external supervision must be carried out properly and consistently.

## E. Conclusion

The independence of pesantren is a necessity for Islamic educational institutions to be free from dependence on outsiders. The facts show that pesantren can rise and compete with other modern institutions in taking the role of educating generations of the nation who are faithful, knowledgeable, charitable, charismatic, and entertainers. Pesantren Darul A'mal is one of the pesantren that develops pesantren business units to realize sustainable pesantren independence. The steps taken by Pesantren Darul A'mal are to conduct comparative studies in various Islamic boarding schools that have good pesantren business management such as Pesantren Sidogiri and Pesantren Sunan Drajat; attend training on pesantren business management; cooperate with various parties such as banks and government institutions in the field of Pesantren business; conduct coordination and evaluation meetings at the beginning of each month.

This study reaffirms the steps that can be taken to optimize the independence of pesantren through strengthening pesantren management, equalizing the perceptions of all pesantren stakeholders about the vision and mission of pesantren, together continuing to learn by providing training, as well as implementing policies well and followed by in-depth evaluation on an ongoing basis. So that the results of this research can be used as a reference for optimizing the pesantren business in realizing sustainable pesantren independence.



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