

## Learning of *Santri* with the Community in Empowering Entrepreneurship at the Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School, Sumberpucung, Malang Regency

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### **Abstract:**

*This study explores the collaborative learning process between santri and the local community in entrepreneurship empowerment at Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School, Sumberpucung, Malang, while analyzing the pesantren's role in facilitating that process. Islamic boarding schools do not function solely as religious-based educational institutions; they can also be regarded as institutions that nurture generations with Islamic character while simultaneously serving as social institutions for community empowerment. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation study, and were analyzed using the interactive model. Credibility of findings was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. The findings reveal that the collaborative learning process between santri and the community unfolds in a gradual and staged manner, with the overarching goal of empowering the surrounding community. Realizing this shared learning process requires the active role of the pesantren under the leadership of its caretaker, encompassing three complementary dimensions: first, the Islamic boarding school as facilitator, providing skills training, business facilities, and mentoring; second, as initiator of entrepreneurship empowerment programs responding to low economic development in Sumberpucung; and third, as a driving agent through integrated social and economic activities engaging all elements of the surrounding community. The findings are expected to enrich scholarly discourse on community and santri empowerment within Non-Formal Education, offering an*

*empirically grounded model that highlights the interplay between cultural authority, participatory mobilization, and community autonomy development.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic boarding schools, entrepreneurship empowerment, students, community, people's pesantren*

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) represent one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, and to this day continue to maintain their existence as centers for the moral, spiritual, and social development of society (Putri; et al., 2023). While the contributions of *pesantren* extend beyond intellectual formation toward the promotion of empowerment among *santri* and the broader community, a critical problem persists: the majority of existing studies continue to examine *pesantren* predominantly through the lens of religious education and character formation, while empirical investigations into how *pesantren* operationalize their role as agents of community-based economic empowerment remain remarkably limited. Although Islamic boarding schools are widely recognized as having significant potential to function as agents of economic empowerment by leveraging long-established social networks and deep-rooted community trust, this potential is not necessarily proportional to its effectiveness in the field. Many *pesantren* face serious structural limitations in managerial capacity, access to business capital, and human resource readiness to sustain viable entrepreneurship programs, while tensions between their religious orientation emphasizing sincerity and simplicity and the practical demands of a profit-oriented business world frequently emerge as obstacles to the internalization of an entrepreneurial spirit among *santri*. Community involvement in *pesantren*-initiated empowerment programs does not always unfold without friction, as social resistance, divergent interests, and unequal access between *santri* and local residents routinely complicate field dynamics. This gap is particularly pronounced in the context of *pesantren rakyat*, community-oriented Islamic boarding schools explicitly prioritizing the socio-economic welfare of marginalized rural populations, where the mechanisms through which collaborative learning between *santri* and local communities translates into sustainable entrepreneurship empowerment have yet to be systematically studied, constituting a substantive scholarly gap that the present study seeks to address.

Several scholarly studies have examined the role of *pesantren* in community empowerment, providing an important foundation for the present investigation. (Mansyuri et al., 2023) assert that *pesantren* function as agents of change capable of dedicating substantial effort toward empowering their surrounding environment, both in terms of scholarly knowledge and practical skills, while (Thoifah, 2019) further underscores the positioning of *pesantren* as transformative institutions capable of directing communities toward genuine empowerment encompassing both intellectual development and practical expertise. Similarly, highlights the strategic role of *pesantren* as agents of social change, particularly in the economic empowerment of *santri* and surrounding communities, confirms that *pesantren* capable of consistently performing the facilitator function are more effective in fostering active community participation and expanding access to local economic opportunities. further contends that *pesantren* occupy a strategically significant position as pioneers of local community-based economic empowerment through programs grounded in community potential. Notwithstanding these contributions, the existing body of literature exhibits three notable limitations that the present study seeks to address. First, the majority of prior studies remain descriptive in orientation, documenting program outcomes without critically analyzing the relational dynamics, internal tensions, or mechanisms through which

empowerment processes unfold at the community level. Second, the specific model of *pesantren rakyat* community-oriented Islamic boarding schools embedded within economically marginalized rural settings has received scant analytical attention, leaving its distinctive empowerment mechanisms undertheorized. Third, the collaborative learning dimension between *santri* and local communities as an integrated process within entrepreneurship empowerment has not been systematically examined within the framework of Non-Formal Education (Oktavia & Kana, 2025). It is precisely within these scholarly gaps that the present study is positioned, contributing an empirically grounded analysis of the processes and roles through which Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School operationalizes community-based entrepreneurship empowerment, and proposing conceptual frameworks including the *culturally-anchored layered initiation model* and a two-dimensional facilitation effectiveness framework that extend beyond descriptive documentation toward analytical and theoretical contribution

Building upon the preceding analysis of the scholarly landscape, this study advances a central argument: that the effectiveness of *pesantren*-based entrepreneurship empowerment is not primarily determined by the comprehensiveness of programs offered or the volume of resources mobilized, but rather by the quality of culturally embedded relational processes through which the *pesantren* engages *santri* and the surrounding community as active participants in a shared learning ecosystem. This argument departs from the prevailing assumption in the existing literature that positions *pesantren* as service providers of empowerment interventions, and instead proposes that *pesantren* particularly the *pesantren rakyat* model function most effectively as empowerment actors when their cultural authority is deployed not to create dependency, but to systematically build collective capacity and facilitate the transfer of autonomous agency to the community. Specifically, this study argues that the role of *pesantren* in entrepreneurship empowerment operates through three analytically distinct yet functionally interdependent dimensions as initiator, facilitator, and driving agent and that these three dimensions do not operate linearly but form an iterative, culturally anchored empowerment cycle grounded in the social capital and moral legitimacy of *pesantren* leadership. Furthermore, this study contends that the collaborative learning process between *santri* and the local community constitutes a form of indigenous learning a locally embedded, organically evolving educational practice that transmits practical knowledge, entrepreneurial skills, and communal values through direct social interaction rather than through formal instructional design (Walad et al., 2025). It is on the basis of these arguments that the present study positions itself as both an empirical investigation and a conceptual contribution, seeking to generate analytical frameworks — most notably the *culturally-anchored layered initiation model* that move beyond descriptive documentation of *pesantren* empowerment practices toward a theoretically grounded understanding of how community-based entrepreneurship learning is initiated, facilitated, and sustained within the *pesantren rakyat* context

Grounded in the scholarly gaps identified above, this study pursues two interrelated objectives: to analyze the collaborative learning process between *santri* and the local community in entrepreneurship empowerment at Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School, Sumberpucung, Malang Regency, with particular attention to the staged, participatory, and culturally embedded mechanisms through which this process unfolds; and to examine the roles performed by the *pesantren* as initiator, facilitator, and driving agent in sustaining and directing this shared learning process toward meaningful and community-centered entrepreneurship empowerment, while generating analytical frameworks that contribute to

the theoretical development of community empowerment studies within Non-Formal Education. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach grounded in the constructivist paradigm. The research site was selected through purposive site selection given that Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School actively and consistently implements community-based entrepreneurship empowerment programs integrating *santri* and surrounding community members in a coordinated and sustained manner. Data were generated through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation study, and were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Credibility and trustworthiness of findings were ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking.

Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School is one of the Islamic boarding schools that has succeeded in developing community-based entrepreneurship empowerment. According to (Muhammad Anwar Fathoni, 2019), is to develop the potential of the surrounding environment in order to reduce poverty and improve community welfare. Beyond religious education, this *pesantren* actively drives business training programs, provides economic facilities, and creates spaces for social interaction that encourage the growth of small businesses among both the community and students. By combining religious values with productive economic activities, it makes a real contribution to improving the welfare of the surrounding community (Komara et al., 2020).

Through participatory and dialogical engagement encompassing skills training, joint business management, and entrepreneurial assistance, Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School has positioned itself simultaneously as facilitator, mediator, and agent of socio-economic change, offering an empirically grounded model of community-based entrepreneurship empowerment that warrants systematic scholarly examination, as well as to examine the strategies applied in building community participation in the economic field. The findings are expected to serve as a reference and alternative model for other Islamic boarding schools and community empowerment institutions in creating a competitive and sustainable community-based economy.

## DISCUSSION

### **The Role of Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School Under the Leadership of Caregivers as Initiators of Join Learning Entrepreneurship Empowerment**

The field findings indicate that the initiator role performed by Pondok Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin is not merely programmatic in nature, but is instead rooted in a process of conscientization a critical awareness of the surrounding socio-economic conditions that subsequently catalyzes the emergence of collective action. This process resonates with Freire's framework of empowerment, in which social transformation originates from the critical recognition of oppressive realities by actors who occupy positions of trust within the community. Within this context, the *pesantren's* caretaker (*pengasuh*), KH. Abdullah SAM, does not function solely as a religious leader, but assumes the role of an organic intellectual in Gramscian terms a figure who emerges from within the community and employs cultural authority to transform the socio-economic conditions of the surrounding population.

This was evidenced during participatory observation, in which the researcher directly witnessed how KH. Abdullah SAM engaged in informal yet purposeful dialogue with community members both after congregational prayers and during community gatherings to identify pressing economic needs and gradually build collective awareness before any formal program was initiated. As one community member affirmed during an in-depth interview:

"the *pesantren*'s caretaker never immediately offered a program. He first listened to our difficulties, then slowly guided us to think about what we could do together." This testimony confirms that the conscientization process at Al-Amin is not incidental, but constitutes a deliberate and systematic pattern of community reading one that precedes program design and serves as the foundational basis upon which collective empowerment action is built

The initiation of the empowerment process at Al-Amin did not originate from a top-down program design, but rather from the *pengasub*'s structural sensitivity to the fundamental challenges faced by the residents of Sumberpucung: Low income levels, dependence on irregular daily labor, and limited entrepreneurial skills. Analytically, this pattern demonstrates that the point of departure for empowerment initiation lies not in the availability of resources, but in problem framing the capacity of local actors to identify and construct community problems as a basis for program legitimacy (Kadir, 2025). This finding reinforces Jeklin's argument that the success of empowerment is largely determined by the ability of local figures to read context, rather than merely designing technical interventions.

Nevertheless, the findings also reveal a significant analytical tension: the model of initiation grounded in the *kyai*'s charismatic leadership carries an inherent risk of structural dependency. The sustainability of such programs is potentially contingent upon a single figure, rendering them vulnerable to stagnation should leadership transition or the *pengasub*'s capacity diminish. This condition reflects terms patron-driven empowerment a mode of empowerment that proves effective in the short term yet fails to fully transfer capacity to the community in an autonomous manner. This finding diverges from the claims of several preceding studies that have tended to romanticize the role of the *kyai* without critically interrogating its structural implications (Syafe'i, 2017)

From the perspective of data analysis, the initiation pattern identified in the field can be categorized into three layered processes: first, cultural legitimation, enacted through religious approaches and needs-based dialogue with the community; second, participatory mobilization, achieved through the active involvement of *santri* and community members in the planning of productive entrepreneurial programs; and third, business institutionalization, realized through the establishment of locally-grounded economic units such as goat farming, biofloc catfish cultivation, and refillable water stations (Ritonga, 2022). These three layers do not operate in a linear sequence; rather, they mutually reinforce one another in an iterative cycle a pattern that may be theoretically conceptualized within the field of community empowerment studies as a culturally-anchored layered initiation mode.

The scientific proposition that may be derived from these findings is as follows: the initiator role in *pesantren*-based entrepreneurship empowerment will be effective to the extent that the leader's cultural authority is employed not to foster dependency, but to systematically and incrementally build collective capacity (Hikmah et al., 2024). Accordingly, the effectiveness of initiation ought not to be measured by the volume of programs launched, but rather by the degree to which the initiation process generates genuine agency endowing the community with the capacity to act autonomously and sustainably beyond the presence of the initiating figure.

### **The Role of Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School Under the Leadership of Caregivers as Facilitators of Joint Learning in Entrepreneurship Empowerment**

This research shows that the Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School has a strategic role as a facilitator in the implementation of community-based entrepreneurship empowerment programs. As a facilitator, *pesantren* is not only the party that initiates the idea of empowerment, but also actively provides facilities, facilitates training, and assists the

community in the business development process. *Pesantren* acts as a link between the needs of the community and various business opportunities that can be developed, both through *pesantren* business units and skills training that is held regularly. The role of this facilitator is carried out with a participatory approach, where students and the community are involved from the planning, implementation, to evaluation stages of joint business activities (Shafwan, M. Nurcholis, 2024).

This facilitative role was directly observed throughout the research period. During field visits, the researcher documented how the *pesantren's* training sessions were not delivered in a top-down, lecture-based manner, but were instead structured as two-way discussions in which community members and *santri* were encouraged to share practical experiences, raise challenges, and collectively identify solutions. As one training participant noted during an in-depth interview: "Here we are not just taught, we are also asked what problems we face in our business, and then we look for answers together." This observation aligns with the theoretical proposition that effective facilitation in community empowerment is not simply the transfer of skills, but the creation of a reflective learning space in which participants develop both technical competencies and a sense of collective ownership over the empowerment process (Hikmah et al., 2024). In this regard, the *pesantren's* facilitative function extends beyond the provision of resources — it actively constructs the conditions under which sustainable, community-driven entrepreneurship can take root and grow.

In its implementation, *pesantren* provide various business facilities that can be accessed by the surrounding community. Some of them are goat farming units, biofloc catfish ponds, people's *pesantren* bands, *pesantren* also facilitate entrepreneurial skills training that are tailored to the needs and potential of the local community. The training includes livestock cultivation, processing of agricultural products, making processed snack products, and cultural arts training as an alternative to creative-based businesses. These facilities are learning spaces as well as direct practice for students and the community in developing real business skills. Islamic boarding schools also facilitate entrepreneurial skills training tailored to the needs and potential of the local community. The training provided covers various areas, such as livestock cultivation, agricultural processing, snack food production, and arts and culture training as alternative creative-based businesses. Through these programs, students and community members not only acquire technical knowledge but also develop independent, creative, and innovative attitudes in managing the resources available in their surroundings. Thus, Islamic boarding schools serve as business incubation centers based on local wisdom and local resource conditions (Rhischa Assabet Shilla et al., 2025).

The facilitator role performed Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School encompasses the provision of entrepreneurial skills training, financial management assistance, and access to local product marketing networks. At this level, the findings share common ground with the research, which asserts that *pesantren* capable of consistently performing the facilitator function will be more effective in fostering active community participation and expanding access to local economic opportunities. Nevertheless, a substantive distinction warrants emphasis, assumes that the effectiveness of facilitation is determined by the comprehensiveness of services provided by the *pesantren*, whereas the findings at Al-Amin indicate that facilitation effectiveness is more decisively shaped by the quality of the trust relationship between the *pesantren* and the community, rather than by the mere availability of technical facilities (Fadhilah & Hidayah, 2025).

Based on the results of the discussion, it can be concluded that the role of facilitators carried out by the Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School is not only limited to providing

business facilities, but also involves the process of mentoring, training, and strengthening community-based business networks. *Pesantren* tries to ensure that people are not only given momentary training, but also accompanied to be able to manage their business independently. The involvement of *pesantren* in facilitating various aspects of empowerment is the key to the success of the people's *pesantren*-based entrepreneurship program. These findings indicate that the facilitator role performed by *Pesantren Al-Amin* demonstrates considerable potential in cultivating a community-based empowerment ecosystem, particularly through the integration of social capital, entrepreneurial skills mentoring, and the strengthening of local economic networks. It must be acknowledged, however, that this study was conducted within a single research locus over a limited timeframe, and therefore does not yet permit the drawing of conclusions regarding long-term sustainability or the broader replicability of the model. Further research encompassing a more diverse range of locations, measurable indicators of success, and a longitudinal evaluation framework is needed to examine whether the facilitation pattern identified at Al-Amin holds consistently across comparable *pesantren* contexts in other regions.

### **The Role of Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School Under the Leadership of Caregivers as a Driving Agent in Entrepreneurship Empowerment**

In addition to playing a role as a facilitator and mediator in entrepreneurship empowerment, the Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School also positions itself as an active social mobilization agent in the surrounding community. *Pesantren* is not only a center for religious education, but at the same time plays a role in building social awareness, strengthening community harmony, and creating a harmonious village atmosphere. Through various social activities, *pesantren* seeks to provide a space for togetherness and collaboration between students and the community, so as to create a harmonious and productive environment. This role can be seen through various social activities that are routinely held by Islamic boarding schools, such as joint *istighosah*, community service work to clean the environment, assistance for residents' activities, and entrepreneurship training open to the community. All of these activities not only aim to strengthen relationships between citizens, but also become a means of instilling the value of social care and community-based economic empowerment. Involving students in community social activities is also one of the effective strategies of *pesantren* in fostering the character of students who are sensitive to the surrounding social conditions.

This mobilizing role was directly observable during the research period. The researcher witnessed how communal activities particularly joint *istighosah* and gotong royong consistently served as informal entry points for deeper economic dialogue, with the *pengasuh* and *santri* using these gatherings not only for spiritual purposes but also to introduce and reinforce empowerment program initiatives. As one community member remarked during an in-depth interview: "*When we gather for istighosah or work together, yai always inserts messages about the importance of working hard and helping each other economically. It does not feel like a lecture it feels natural.*" This finding suggests that the *pesantren*'s social mobilization function operates through a process of cultural embeddedness, in which economic empowerment values are woven into existing communal rituals rather than imposed as separate programmatic interventions. Involving *santri* in these community social activities further reinforces this dynamic, as it simultaneously cultivates socially sensitive character among students and strengthens the relational trust between the *pesantren* and the broader community a trust that ultimately serves as the social capital upon which sustainable entrepreneurship empowerment is built

This role not only strengthens social ties, but also has a positive impact on citizens' participation in local economic empowerment programs. In line with that, according to (Farah Qalbia & M. Reza Saputra, 2023), the presence of social mobilization agents at the community level such as Islamic boarding schools is key in facilitating the realization of social change based on local needs, because it is able to directly touch people's daily problems. community service work to clean the environment, assistance for residents' activities, and entrepreneurship training open to the community. All of these activities not only aim to strengthen relationships between citizens, but also become a means of instilling the value of social care and community-based economic empowerment (Dwi Firmansyah et al., 2025)

With a pattern of approach based on local culture and unfettered daily interaction between students and residents, Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School has succeeded in building a solid culture of mutual cooperation. the routine patterns of interaction between *santri* and residents create a learning environment that is both informal and deeply contextual, allowing students to internalize values such as cooperation, solidarity, and mutual responsibility (Rustandi et al., 2026) Community activities such as community service, business training, and the provision of assistance when residents experience disasters are routine agendas driven by Islamic boarding schools and the community. This shows that *pesantren* is not only a religious institution, but also acts as a driving force for social change whose benefits are directly felt by the surrounding community.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design, selected on the basis of its alignment with the research objectives namely, to develop an in-depth understanding of the process and role of Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School in the entrepreneurship empowerment of *santri* and the surrounding community (Rustandi et al., 2026). A descriptive qualitative approach enables the researcher to capture the dynamics, meanings, and context of social phenomena holistically as they occur in the field, rather than merely measuring variables through statistical (Erni Murniarti, 2024). To achieve these objectives, this study employs a descriptive qualitative approach (Haryoko et al., 2020) To achieve these objectives, this study employs a descriptive qualitative approach grounded in the constructivist paradigm, selected on the basis of its capacity to capture the complexity, contextuality, and relational dynamics of empowerment processes that cannot be adequately reduced to numerical measurement or generalized categories, choice of this design is grounded in the recognition that *pesantren*-based entrepreneurship empowerment constitutes a complex and contextually embedded phenomenon that cannot be reduced to numerical data or generalized categories.

This study was conducted at Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School, located in Sumberpucung Village, Sumberpucung District, Malang Regency, East Java. The research site was selected through purposive site selection, based on the consideration that the *pesantren* actively and consistently implements community-based economic empowerment programs that integrate *santri* and the surrounding community in a coordinated manner, rendering it a relevant locus for investigating the phenomenon under study. The selection of research informants was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, with the criterion that informants possess direct involvement in and substantive knowledge of the *pesantren*'s entrepreneurship empowerment programs. The informants consisted of: (1) the *pesantren* caretaker (*pengasuh*) as the program leader and initiator; (2) *pesantren* administrators responsible for the technical implementation of programs; (3) *santri* actively engaged in empowerment activities; and (4) community members participating in the *pesantren*'s productive business programs. The number of informants was determined based on the

principle of data saturation, whereby data collection was concluded when the information obtained reached a point of redundancy and no longer yielded significant new findings.

Data analysis was carried out using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, comprising three stages that operate simultaneously and continuously throughout the research process: (1) *data condensation*, the process of selecting, simplifying, and transforming raw data into meaningful categories; (2) *data display*, the organization of information into narrative form, matrices, or diagrams to facilitate the drawing of conclusions; and (3) *conclusion drawing and verification*, the process of interpreting findings conducted reflexively and iteratively throughout the duration of the study. Data analysis was carried out using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. Comprising three stages that operate simultaneously and continuously throughout the research process: (1) *data condensation*, the process of selecting, simplifying, and transforming raw data into meaningful categories; (2) *data display*, the organization of information into narrative form, matrices, or diagrams to facilitate the drawing of conclusions; and (3) *conclusion drawing and verification*, the process of interpreting findings conducted reflexively and iteratively throughout the duration of the study.

## CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the role of Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School Sumberpucung in the entrepreneurship empowerment process involving *santri* and the surrounding community in a collaborative manner. Based on the field findings, it can be concluded that the *pesantren* performs three complementary and mutually reinforcing roles namely, as an initiator, facilitator, and driving agent of community-based entrepreneurship empowerment. These three roles do not operate in isolation; rather, they form an iterative empowerment cycle commencing with the identification of the community's socio-economic problems, progressing through participatory mobilization, and consolidated through the institutionalization of productive business units grounded in local potential.

Conceptually, these findings yield two theoretical contributions of relevance to the advancement of community empowerment studies within the field of Non-Formal Education. First, this study introduces the concept of the *culturally-anchored layered initiation model* as an analytical framework for understanding how the cultural authority of local leaders is deployed in a layered and incremental manner throughout the empowerment initiation process. Second (Wicaksono et al., 2024). This study proposes that the effectiveness of *pesantren*-based facilitation must be evaluated through two complementary dimensions: the *relational dimension*, which measures the quality of trust and cultural proximity between the *pesantren* and the community, and the *transformative dimension*, which assesses the extent to which the facilitation process generates genuine *autonomy transfer* that is, the community's capacity to act independently and sustainably beyond reliance on the initiating institution. Both contributions extend the existing analytical frameworks and offer a new perspective for understanding the *pesantren*-community relationship, a dimension that remains largely underexplored in the preceding literature.

Nevertheless, this study carries limitations that must be explicitly acknowledged. The research was conducted within a single research locus over a limited timeframe; consequently, the findings cannot be directly generalized to other *pesantren* contexts characterized by different social, economic, and leadership configurations. Furthermore, the measurement of the long-term impact of the empowerment programs implemented falls outside the scope of the present study and warrants dedicated investigation in future research.

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