

Empowering Santripreneurs through Communication: Insights from Three Islamic Boarding Schools in Yogyakarta

Memberdayakan Santripreneur melalui Komunikasi: Wawasan dari Tiga Pondok Pesantren di Yogyakarta

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Abstract: *Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia combine religious scholarship with efforts to cultivate Muslim entrepreneurs through santripreneurship programs, yet little is known about how these programs are formed communicatively. This study examines how santripreneurship is shaped through empowerment communication in three pesantren in Yogyakarta: Al Fitroh, Al Munawwir Krapyak, and Sunan Pandanaran. A qualitative multi-site field design was applied over two years of fieldwork. Data were generated through in-depth interviews with pesantren leaders and santri, contextual observation, and institutional materials, and were analyzed through iterative reading, within-case examination, and cross-case comparison. Three interrelated findings emerged. Entrepreneurship is first legitimized through moral and religious narratives; entrepreneurial capacity is then built through participatory everyday routines and organizational discipline; and digital entrepreneurship remains unevenly developed, depending on each pesantren's communicative infrastructure rather than on access to technology alone. Santripreneurship is therefore best understood as a communicatively constituted institutional practice rather than a fixed program. The findings suggest that pesantren should invest in structured mentoring, participatory task routines, and continuous digital training. The study is limited to three pesantren in one region and to institutional-level patterns, so its findings should not be generalized to all Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia.*

Keywords: Santripreneurship, empowerment communication, Islamic boarding schools, entrepreneurship

Abstrak: *Pondok pesantren di Indonesia memadukan pembinaan keilmuan agama dengan upaya menumbuhkan wirausaha muslim melalui program santripreneurship, tetapi kajian tentang pembentukan program tersebut secara komunikatif masih terbatas. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana santripreneurship dibentuk melalui komunikasi pemberdayaan di tiga pesantren di Yogyakarta, yaitu Al Fitroh, Al Munawwir Krapyak, dan Sunan Pandanaran. Penelitian menggunakan desain kualitatif lapangan multisitus selama dua tahun. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pimpinan pesantren dan santri, observasi kontekstual, serta bahan kelembagaan, kemudian dianalisis melalui pembacaan berulang, pemeriksaan intrakasus, dan perbandingan lintaskasus. Terdapat tiga temuan yang saling berkaitan. Kewirausahaan pertama-tama dilegitimasi melalui narasi moral dan keagamaan; kapasitas wirausaha kemudian dibangun melalui rutinitas harian yang partisipatif dan disiplin organisasi; sedangkan kewirausahaan digital masih berkembang tidak merata karena bergantung pada infrastruktur komunikasi setiap pesantren, bukan pada akses teknologi semata. Dengan demikian,*

santripreneurship lebih tepat dipahami sebagai praktik kelembagaan yang dibentuk secara komunikatif, bukan program yang bersifat tetap. Temuan ini menyiratkan bahwa pesantren perlu berinvestasi pada pendampingan terstruktur, rutinitas tugas partisipatif, dan pelatihan digital berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini terbatas pada tiga pesantren di satu wilayah dan pada pola tingkat kelembagaan sehingga temuannya tidak dapat digeneralisasi ke seluruh pesantren di Indonesia.
Kata kunci: Santripreneurship, komunikasi pemberdayaan, pondok pesantren, kewirausahaan

Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia are growing rapidly. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, there were around 39,000 Islamic boarding schools across the country in 2023 ([Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2025](#)). This expansion is a strategic opportunity for the government to foster new entrepreneurs and stimulate the small and medium-sized industry sector. Beyond deepening religious knowledge, Islamic boarding schools hold considerable potential for economic development. Developing santri with competencies beyond religious knowledge requires an efficient and contextual self-development model. One such model is santripreneurship, which aligns with Islamic values and reflects the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and Qur'anic guidance, particularly Surah Al-Jumu'ah verse 10. Through this model, the skills and entrepreneurial capacity of santri can be nurtured, producing competitive and economically independent individuals.

In recent years, many Islamic boarding schools across Indonesia have shown that they can manage economic activities with innovation and autonomy. Programs that promote economic empowerment through santripreneurship continue to gain traction, aiming to prepare santri as resilient and competent graduates. Government institutions and business actors have supported this momentum through training and financial assistance. A notable example is Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School, which provided vocational training in fish farming and footwear production to foster economic resilience ([Falach et al., 2023](#)).

This momentum resonates with global academic discussions on integrating humane values into faith-based entrepreneurship. Humane entrepreneurship, which combines spirituality, innovation, and social awareness, has been recognized as a sustainable approach to transforming Islamic boarding schools into microeconomic ecosystems ([Anggadwita et al., 2021](#)). Recent studies also emphasize that entrepreneurship in Islamic boarding schools requires more than skill building. It demands an integrated ecosystem of leadership, digital capacity, market access, and enabling policies ([Dzikrulloh et al., 2023](#)).

Despite growing attention to santripreneurship as a model of economic empowerment, limited research has examined how this model is integrated pedagogically and communicatively within Islamic boarding schools. Most studies focus on technical outcomes and overlook how internal communication among kiai, educators, and santri serves as a medium for value transmission, participation, and identity formation. This omission warrants scholarly attention.

[Sulaiman and Ahmadi \(2020\)](#) studied an Islamic boarding school cooperative in Central Java. They found that empowerment communication, characterized by dialogic, egalitarian, and participatory interactions, not only harmonizes community relationships but also strengthens economic agency. These findings indicate that communication is not merely a support mechanism but a core driver of transformative education and capacity building in the Islamic boarding school context.

This study adopts an interdisciplinary perspective that combines Islamic education, entrepreneurship, and empowerment communication. Such integration is relatively rare but crucial for understanding how religious institutions foster economic resilience through internal

dialogue and value-based mentoring. The study also aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Initiatives such as eco-Islamic boarding schools and university-Islamic boarding school collaborations show how Islamic education can advance value-based and sustainable development agendas (Anabarja & Mubah, 2021; Lathifah et al., 2025).

In the digital era, this integration becomes even more urgent. The rapid evolution of information and communication technology compels Islamic boarding schools to modernize, not only to remain competitive but also to expand their influence. Digital innovation enhances marketing, financial management, and public communication. Wijaya et al. (2024) highlight that Islamic boarding schools that embrace digital transformation are better positioned to thrive in the context of Industry 4.0. Islamic boarding institutions also act as key actors in nurturing religious moderation, facilitating intercultural dialogue, and promoting value-oriented education, which helps maintain harmony between faith practices and state governance (Izomiddin et al., 2025).

In line with this vision, the Indonesian government launched the Umat Economic Partnership Program in 2019. By 2020, the initiative had expanded into specialized training for Islamic boarding school-based micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), particularly in the food sector. Imam Safe'i, Secretary of the Directorate General of Islamic Education, emphasized the need for collaborative digital-based training to build economically independent Islamic boarding schools. He stated that empowering Islamic boarding schools through digital MSMEs is not merely an economic agenda but also a core function of community empowerment that complements education and da'wah (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam, 2020).

Yogyakarta was chosen as the research site because of its growing number of Islamic boarding schools and their proactive involvement in santripreneurship. The selected Islamic boarding schools, Al Munawwir Krapyak, Al Fitroh, and Sunan Pandanaran, offer insights into how entrepreneurial spirit is nurtured among santri. This study explores how santripreneurship is developed through empowerment communication in response to the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Islamic boarding schools function as cultural institutions deeply embedded in community structures. Since the 1970s, many of them have expanded their scope beyond religious instruction to address economic and social challenges. A prominent example is the santripreneurship program, which empowers santri through entrepreneurship training aimed at fostering economic independence (Masum & Wajdi, 2018). Participants learn essential business skills, including digital marketing, and they use tools such as Canva to produce appealing product branding and to engage with diverse market strategies. A field study by Amalia and Faizah (2022) showed high levels of student enthusiasm, participation, and strategic effort, and it recommended expanding the program to include ad-based revenue models and endorsement collaborations.

Communication is increasingly recognized as a key element in the success of santripreneurship initiatives. Sulaiman and Ahmadi (2020) found that dialogic and participatory communication within Islamic boarding school communities fosters social harmony and strengthens the capacity of santri to engage in economic activities. Complementing this finding, El Rahman (2021) observed that students exposed to persuasive messaging and creative marketing strategies tend to show higher confidence and autonomy in entrepreneurial contexts. Sarwenda et al. (2024) highlight that integrating Islamic values with digital literacy has enabled santri to adapt to the demands of the digital economy. Taken together, these studies suggest that communication grounded in shared values and supported by technological fluency plays a

vital role in nurturing santri who are economically capable as well as socially and spiritually grounded.

While these studies underscore the promise of communication and value integration, Islamic boarding schools also possess institutional strengths rooted in community and religious values, although these strengths are not always optimized through entrepreneurship-based initiatives. [Shohib and Narsim \(2023\)](#) emphasize that the santripreneur program responds to the changing landscape of Islamic education and the demands of industrial development. Its activities include creativity conferences, product design, and business planning based on Islamic principles taught in Islamic boarding schools. These activities help improve students' soft skills, such as open-mindedness, creativity, and adaptability to industrial settings. Technology use is also growing among santri, supported by research skills, social media use, and digital marketing practices, which enable them to promote their products effectively in the digital era.

Several Islamic boarding schools illustrate how these strengths are applied in practice by establishing entrepreneurial units. Fathul Ulum Islamic Boarding School manages business units in animal husbandry, agriculture, and welding. These units are designed to enhance students' practical skills and promote independence, and students take part in business operations as part of their daily learning. Supervisors evaluate each santri's skills to identify areas of interest. For example, students who are interested in technology are directed toward training in automotive work, electric welding, or computer engineering. Although simple in method, this approach has produced meaningful results in student empowerment ([Aslihah & Yaqin, 2021](#)).

To optimize santri capacity, Islamic boarding schools integrate entrepreneurship training into their curricula. [Yuliani and Novita \(2022\)](#) argue that developing santripreneurs strengthens community economic resilience. They emphasize that sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems require synergy among students, teachers, parents, communities, and external stakeholders. Such collaboration enhances organizational structures, human resource capacity, and business performance. Ultimately, this holistic model positions Islamic boarding schools as hubs of Muslim civilization and economic empowerment in Indonesia.

Islamic boarding schools are not only centers of religious education but also autonomous institutions and agents of community development. They are known for cultivating perseverance, honesty, diligence, and strong moral character among students ([Yusuf & Imawan, 2022](#)). Many have expanded their roles by establishing cooperatives, small and medium enterprises, and training centers that serve as incubators for student entrepreneurship. These initiatives provide a strong foundation for economic empowerment and prepare Islamic boarding schools to face the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution ([Fachrurrozie et al., 2021](#)). Complementing this perspective, [Dzikrulloh et al. \(2023\)](#) emphasize that entrepreneurship in Islamic boarding schools requires more than isolated programs. It needs an integrated ecosystem that combines Islamic values with education, leadership, market access, financial systems, and supportive policies. This approach ensures that economic empowerment is sustainable and aligned with the cultural and spiritual mission of Islamic boarding schools.

Islamic boarding schools are generally established by individuals (kiai) who also act as central figures and hold strong authority in determining the goals the school wants to achieve. However, the formal formulation of a school's final goal must remain comprehensive and consistent with the foundation of the nation's ideals, namely Pancasila ([Sari, 2019](#)).

Islamic boarding schools, as educational institutions, have a significant mission to produce graduates with a job-creating mindset. Today, there is an urgent need to shift people's mindset from seeking work to creating jobs. It is therefore a priority to convey to communities and young people, as early as possible, that success can be achieved at a young age and need not wait until later in life. Entrepreneurship training in Islamic boarding schools can effectively

communicate the spirit of entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurship education can help develop teaching and learning situations that are closely related to student character development (Arwin et al., 2023).

An Islamic boarding school can be defined as an Islamic religious education institution that grows within, and is recognized by, the surrounding community. Its students receive education and instruction (al-tarbiyyah wa al-ta'lim) through a recitation or madrasah system, under the full supervision of one or several people who hold independence in all matters. In Islamic boarding schools, santri education involves not only theory but also the practice of religious teachings. These schools are centers for instilling religious moral values (tafaqquh fi al-din) and are effective in shaping human identity with good morals. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that Islamic boarding schools have dual ideals and roles: educational development and community empowerment (Hilyatin, 2015).

Santripreneurship offers solutions to the challenges that the Industry 4.0 era poses for students. Students are taught to think creatively and take advantage of existing opportunities, at least to meet demand and stimulate business activity with local residents. Many activities can develop students' entrepreneurial skills, and using opportunities around the Islamic boarding school is one way to encourage creative thinking (Fachrurrozie et al., 2021).

Santripreneurs are young people who attend Islamic boarding schools and are interested in running a business. They need support to manage their businesses effectively while also demonstrating proficiency in reading the Qur'an, and they have considerable potential to develop the businesses they run. In reality, however, santripreneurs face several obstacles, including limited ability to take advantage of business opportunities in the digital era. Creativity and innovation are needed for business development in the Industrial Revolution era, and information technology is one possible approach. Santripreneurs are often unable to use existing technology to generate additional income, and when they do, the income is not significant. It is therefore important to give students opportunities to start a business after completing their studies (Fachrurrozie et al., 2021).

To develop Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, the Directorate of Madrasah and Islamic Boarding School Education restores the independence of Islamic boarding schools through two aspects: fostering entrepreneurship and instilling skills. The Boarding School Entrepreneurship Program is an alternative program that trains students' minds and develops an entrepreneurial spirit, including a sense of independence and a willingness not to depend always on others. The program is designed to meet students' daily needs as well as the operational costs of the Islamic boarding school and formal education. Instilling an entrepreneurial spirit in young people is not easy, because people are often hindered by fear of failure, fear of fame, and lack of confidence. An entrepreneurship training program can therefore train students' minds to be productive while providing a source of income for the school. The daily entrepreneurial activities are expected to fulfill the needs of the students and the Islamic boarding school leaders (kiai), which is the key benefit of this activity (EQ et al., 2020).

Entrepreneurship education in Islamic boarding schools is still dominated by theory and concepts and is practiced only at a shallow level, which is one reason it is less effective. Directly involving male and female santri (santri and santriwati) in entrepreneurial practice is therefore very important. Through direct training, entrepreneurial characteristics such as confidence, perseverance, integrity, creativity, and innovation can be developed more efficiently and effectively, and direct practice also increases santri's life skills. Entrepreneurship education in Islamic boarding schools should be based on life skills, because santri use these skills to enter the business and industrial world. Male and female santri are given life skills that help them organize themselves and interact better with the people around them. Given the urgent need for

a millennial generation that is persistent, resilient, confident, responsible, creative, and innovative, instilling entrepreneurial spirit and character early is imperative (Arwin et al., 2023).

Santripreneur is an abbreviation of santri and entrepreneur, so the discussion of santripreneurs is closely related to entrepreneurship. The term has no standardized meaning, because searches in several Indonesian and foreign dictionaries do not yield a definition. A santripreneur is a santri (a person who attends an Islamic boarding school) who has his or her own business and dares to start production activities independently. The term can also refer to a student who takes risks to run a business, seizes opportunities to create new ventures, and adopts innovative approaches so that the business grows significantly and faces competition independently. According to this concept, a santripreneur may have a natural talent for entrepreneurship, may have been trained as an entrepreneur, may have been trained in an Islamic boarding school, or may have gained experience there. The general concept of entrepreneurship supports this view, and a moderate position holds that there is no contradiction between entrepreneurs who are born, trained, or shaped by their environment. Natural talent or education alone is not enough to become an entrepreneur (Hasrun et al., 2023).

Table 1. Islamic Boarding School Statistics by Province, 2020–2024

Province Name	2020	2022	2023	2024
Aceh	1177	1626	1714	1923
Sumatera Utara	183	345	373	440
Sumatera Barat	211	260	273	304
Riau	233	403	449	543
Jambi	229	366	416	480
Sumatera Selatan	317	510	544	669
Bengkulu	52	84	90	109
Lampung	675	1145	1197	1357
Bangka Belitung	53	77	77	98
Kepulauan Riau	63	113	118	137
DKI Jakarta	102	135	149	172
Jawa Barat	8343	11697	12123	12977
Jawa Tengah	3787	4842	5084	5347
DI Yogyakarta	319	392	399	438
Jawa Timur	4450	6437	6745	7347
Banten	4574	6290	6433	6776

Bali	90	105	104	110
Nusa Tenggara Barat	684	863	886	958
Nusa Tenggara Timur	27	41	41	41
Kalimantan Barat	245	307	315	370
Kalimantan Tengah	76	108	107	115
Kalimantan Selatan	214	289	300	333
Kalimantan Timur	163	214	82	248
Kalimantan Utara	21	34	34	42
Sulawesi Utara	22	28	31	38
Sulawesi Tengah	88	130	134	134
Sulawesi Selatan	289	389	394	415
Sulawesi Tenggara	86	117	128	153
Gorontalo	28	38	40	43
Sulawesi Barat	73	101	104	111
Maluku	16	35	29	34
Maluku Utara	20	28	38	46
Papua	37	47	50	55
Papua Barat	18	20	23	28
Total:	26.965	37.616	39.024	42.391

Source: [Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia \(2025\)](#)

As shown in Table 1, the national distribution of pesantren from 2020 to 2024 illustrates the scale of this growth as a policy backdrop. DI Yogyakarta itself grew from 319 pesantren in 2020 to 438 in 2024, which reflects the institutional expansion cited earlier as the rationale for selecting this province as the research setting.

Islam has encouraged entrepreneurship among its followers since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), more than 1,400 years ago. He is reported to have said that nine out of ten people become wealthy through trade or entrepreneurship. For a Muslim, the primary goal of entrepreneurship remains the pleasure of Allah (ridha Allah). The hadith, “The upper hand is better than the lower hand,” illustrates this point: giving, including almsgiving of any kind, is better than receiving. In this context, the “lower hand” signals a lack of effort for one’s own prosperity, whereas the “upper hand” signals that a person strives for himself and for others. The following hadiths on Allah’s love for people who work illustrate this principle.

(عَنْ غَاصِمِ بْنِ عُبَيْدٍ اللَّهِ عَنْ سَالِمٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُؤْمِنَ الْمُخْتَرِفَ (أَخْرَجَهُ الْبَيْهَقِيُّ).

Narrated from 'Ashim ibn 'Ubaidillah, from Salim, from his father, who said that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "Verily, Allah loves the believer who works." (HR Al-Baihaqy).

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ ، قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : لَيْسَ بِخَيْرِكُمْ مَنْ تَرَكَ دُنْيَاهُ لِآخِرَتِهِ وَلَا آخِرَتُهُ لِدُنْيَاهُ حَتَّى يُصِيبَ مِنْهُمَا جَمِيعًا فَإِنَّ (الدُّنْيَا بَلَاغٌ إِلَى الْآخِرَةِ وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَلَأَ عَلَى النَّاسِ) (رواه الديلمي وابن عساکر

Narrated from Anas bin Malik, who said that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "The best among you is not the one who abandons his worldly affairs for the hereafter, or his hereafter for the world, until he attains both. Indeed, the life of this world leads to the life of the hereafter. Do not be a burden on others." (HR Ad-Dailamy and Ibn Asakir).

عَنْ الْمُقَدَّمِ بْنِ مَعْدِيكَرِبٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ : مَا أَكَلَ أَحَدٌ طَعَامًا قَطُّ خَيْرًا مِنْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ يَدِهِ ، وَإِنْ نَبِيٍّ (الله دَاوَدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ كَانَ يَأْكُلُ مِنْ عَمَلٍ يَدِهِ. (رواه البخارى

Narrated from Al-Miqdam bin Ma'dikarib (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "No one has ever eaten better food than that which he earns by the work of his own hands. Indeed, the Prophet of Allah, David (peace be upon him), ate from the work of his hands." (HR Al-Bukhori).

The life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) offers a further example. As a child he lived with a desert tribe and learned to tend sheep and camels. He later joined his uncle on caravan trips from Arabia to Syria and attended trade assemblies and exhibitions in Mecca, where he may have heard people of different religions share ideas about business. His business spirit was thus nurtured from an early age, and Allah shaped his strength of personality through an orphaned childhood. He honed his business mentality as a shepherd for the Meccans, earning a reward for this work. Herding goats became his initial capital for learning to organize, maintain, and breed livestock, so that a management mindset was embedded early on. He later became a trader, and by his twenties his trade had reached neighboring countries ([Kewirausahaan Walisongo, 2017](#)). These prophetic examples and hadiths on labor and enterprise provide the normative foundation for the santripreneurship model examined in this study, situating the empirical analysis that follows within an explicitly Islamic conceptual framework of work, moral responsibility, and economic agency.

However, despite the growing prominence of the santripreneurship movement, several research gaps persist. First, the literature often emphasizes short-term program outcomes and lacks longitudinal studies that assess sustainability and long-term impact. Second, although digital technology adoption is frequently mentioned, few studies have analyzed the extent of digital transformation in santri-run businesses, including challenges in infrastructure and training ([Fitri et al., 2023](#)). Third, the role of kiai leadership in fostering an entrepreneurial culture is underexplored, particularly how traditional religious authority aligns or conflicts with modern economic practices. Finally, comparative research that traces variation across pesantren operating under broadly similar cultural and regional conditions remains limited, leaving open how institutional differences, rather than regional context alone, shape variation in program outcomes.

Building on these gaps and on its interdisciplinary perspective, which remains relatively rare in research on Islamic education, entrepreneurship, and empowerment communication, this study addresses the limited attention given to how santripreneurship is integrated pedagogically and communicatively within Islamic boarding schools. It does so by investigating how entrepreneurship education is implemented, the degree of integration between religious

values and digital innovation, and the dynamic role of the kiai in shaping santri entrepreneurial behavior. The novelty of this study lies in its explicit focus on empowerment communication, rather than technical program outcomes alone, as the mechanism through which santripreneurship is legitimized, organized, and unevenly translated into practice across three contrasting pesantren operating under broadly similar cultural conditions. By extending the concept of humane entrepreneurship ([Anggadwita et al., 2021](#)), this study contributes a more holistic understanding of how Islamic boarding schools can serve as agents of value-driven economic development within Indonesia's Islamic education framework. Accordingly, this study aims to examine how santripreneurship is communicatively formed in the Al Fitroh, Al Munawwir Krapyak, and Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding Schools in Yogyakarta.

Methods

This study used a qualitative multi-site field research design to examine how santripreneurship is communicatively formed in three pesantren in Yogyakarta: Al Fitroh, Al Munawwir Krapyak, and Sunan Pandanaran. A qualitative design was appropriate because the central concern was not measuring entrepreneurship outcomes but understanding how entrepreneurial action becomes meaningful, legitimate, organized, and practicable in the everyday social life of pesantren. Fieldwork spanned two years to capture institutional routines, value orientations, and recurring communicative processes rather than momentary program snapshots.

The three pesantren were selected as contrasting institutional settings rather than interchangeable examples. Each displayed a different configuration of entrepreneurship education, organizational practice, and digital orientation, which made cross-case comparison analytically possible. The comparative value of the design lay in tracing variation under broadly similar cultural and religious conditions. All three pesantren operated within the pesantren tradition of Yogyakarta and drew on shared Islamic moral vocabularies, yet they differed in the extent to which entrepreneurship was routinized, supervised, and extended into digital practice. This made it possible to examine not only whether santripreneurship existed but also how it was institutionally formed and why its organizational depth varied across settings.

Data were generated through in-depth interviews, contextual observation, and institutional materials. Interviews involved pesantren leaders and santri to capture how entrepreneurship, independence, Islamic values, discipline, and institutional responsibility were understood and articulated by actors positioned differently within pesantren life. Observation followed how entrepreneurial routines were embedded in everyday interaction, including the distribution of roles, the coordination of tasks, the supervision of work, and the practical organization of business-related activities. Institutional and supporting materials were read not merely as background but as part of the communicative environment through which pesantren framed entrepreneurship, justified participation, and represented institutional priorities. The design therefore relied on data triangulation across talk, practice, and documentary framing.

The analysis proceeded interpretively through iterative reading, within-case examination, and cross-case comparison. Rather than coding the material around pre-given entrepreneurship indicators, the analysis focused on recurring communicative patterns that explained how entrepreneurial activity became institutionally possible. Three analytic questions guided the reading: how entrepreneurship was morally legitimized, how it was organized through everyday communication, and how digital entrepreneurial discourse was translated into practice. These questions gradually yielded three cross-case findings: moral and communicative legitimation, organizational routine and discipline, and uneven digital adaptation. The analytic logic was therefore explanatory rather than merely descriptive. Santripreneurship was treated not as a list

of programs but as a communicatively constituted institutional practice, whose variation could be understood only by tracing the relationships among values, routines, participation, and organizational capacity.

Results and Discussion

This study focused on Islamic boarding schools in Yogyakarta that run entrepreneurship programs. This section first introduces the three research settings and then presents three interrelated findings, each interpreted and discussed in relation to relevant theory and prior research. A final subsection integrates the findings into a broader argument.

Research Settings: Three Contrasting Pesantren

Al Fitroh Islamic Boarding School in Bantul, Yogyakarta, was founded around 1970 by K.H. Abdul Muhith Nawawi, who had studied at several pesantren in Central Java, including Kaliwungu and Watu Congol. What began as a traditional pesantren with about 20 resident students has grown into an institution of roughly 300 male and female santri from various regions. After the founder's death in 2004, leadership, including several ta'lim councils he ran across Bantul, Yogyakarta, and Sleman, passed to his eldest son, H. Ahmad Mamshad. Al Fitroh combines salafi and semi-modern learning models (Madrasah Diniyah, Bandongan, and Sorogan systems) with an entrepreneurship curriculum built around agricultural and livestock activities, which received support from the Yogyakarta Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry beginning in 2019.

Al Munawwir Islamic Boarding School in Krapyak, Yogyakarta, is a well-established pesantren that has run a dedicated entrepreneurship initiative through its Economic Development Division since 2018. As of December 2019, it hosted around 1,972 students. Beyond religious instruction, the pesantren treats entrepreneurial skill as essential preparation for santri to compete in an increasingly advanced era. This commitment is formalized through its cooperative (Kopontren), related business units, and its flagship "Ngaji Bisnis" program.

Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School, one of the largest pesantren in Yogyakarta, was established on 20 December 1975 in Sardonoharjo, Ngaglik, Sleman, by K.H. Mufid Mas'ud, the 14th descendant of Sunan Pandanaran. It is known primarily as a Qur'anic pesantren that produces male and female Qur'an memorizers (hafidz and hafidzoh). It has since expanded into branches across Indonesia and now serves an estimated 20,000 students nationwide. Alongside its core Qur'anic curriculum, it has introduced entrepreneurship-related content, including handicraft production and coursework on digital platforms such as Tokopedia and Gojek, as part of its broader mission to form santri who are intellectually capable, spiritually grounded, and independent.

These profiles show that the three pesantren share a common institutional tradition but differ markedly in scale, curriculum, and entrepreneurial orientation. Al Fitroh builds on land-based agricultural and livestock activity, Al Munawwir Krapyak on a cooperative and related business units, and Sunan Pandanaran on a Qur'anic curriculum with entrepreneurship-related additions. Unit-based approaches of this kind resemble those reported at Fathul Ulum Islamic Boarding School (Aslihah & Yaqin, 2021) and Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School (Falach et al., 2023), where business units and vocational training serve as vehicles for santri independence. The contrast among the three settings is what makes cross-case comparison analytically useful, because it allows variation in santripreneurship to be traced to institutional configuration rather than to regional culture alone.

Moral and Empowerment-Oriented Legitimation of Santripreneurship

Three interrelated findings explain how santripreneurship is formed across the three pesantren. Rather than treating each pesantren as a self-contained case, the analysis

foregrounds processes of empowerment communication, namely moral, organizational, and infrastructural communication, through which entrepreneurship is legitimized, organized, and unevenly translated into practice and through which santri are gradually positioned as capable, self-reliant economic agents. The first finding concerns legitimation.

Across the three pesantren, entrepreneurship is not introduced as a secular or purely technical activity. It is first rendered legitimate and psychologically enabling through moral narratives, religious exemplars, and institutional messaging that frame economic activity as compatible with piety, discipline, and service. This legitimation functions as empowerment communication: it builds santri's confidence and sense of agency by reframing entrepreneurship as a morally sanctioned extension of pesantren education rather than a deviation from it.

At Al Fitroh, entrepreneurial practice is tied to prophetic values (fathanah, sidiq, amanah) and translated into concrete commercial norms such as service orientation, ethical branding, and honesty in exchange. At Al Munawwir Krapyak, aspiration is cultivated through "Ngaji Bisnis," where seminars link business ambition to exemplary figures such as Abdurrahman bin Auf. This aspirational, motivational mode of empowerment builds symbolic capital before practical skill. At Sunan Pandanaran, entrepreneurship is justified through Qur'anic discourse and the pesantren's vision of forming independent, capable santri, although this framing remains more institutional than practically translated.

These legitimating narratives rest on the view that Islam does not prohibit entrepreneurship and instead encourages every individual to be active, work hard, and maintain a high work ethic in business. At Sunan Pandanaran, graduates are expected to be proficient in the Qur'an and also equipped with entrepreneurial knowledge. The pesantren's vision and mission aim to produce intellectually capable students with adequate spiritual intelligence, independence, achievement, and a Qur'anic personality. Its mission includes organizing creative education grounded in pesantren culture, organizing Qur'anic education in line with the creed (aqidah) of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah, providing integrated information and communication technology facilities, and organizing worship activities (PP Sunan Pandanaran Yogyakarta, n.d.).

The contrast is instructive: Al Fitroh grounds legitimation in practical virtue, Al Munawwir Krapyak in motivational exemplarity, and Sunan Pandanaran in a broader institutional narrative with weaker follow-through. Shared Islamic values alone do not generate uniform entrepreneurial forms. What matters is each institution's capacity to communicatively authorize and empower santri to see business as a legitimate expression of self-reliance and contribution.

Santripreneurship thus looks less like a stable program than a contested communicative accomplishment within religious institutions. Moral legitimation does real work, but not smoothly. Religious narratives, prophetic exemplars, and institutional messaging are not simply Islamic decoration placed over entrepreneurship. They respond to a genuine tension, because economic ambition cannot be assumed to fit religious education without interpretive effort. Entrepreneurship does not arrive as a neutral technical package; it has to be made morally intelligible in an environment where religious authority and educational purpose still take precedence over market logic. It has to be narrated as compatible with piety, service, and responsibility precisely because that compatibility is not automatic. This suggests that legitimation is better understood as a continuing communicative task than as a one-time endorsement.

These findings also qualify much of the existing literature, which reads pesantren entrepreneurship through the language of training provision, skill enhancement, or economic empowerment (Arwin et al., 2023; Fachrurrozie et al., 2021; Masum & Wajdi, 2018), as though the educational and economic value of entrepreneurship simply follows once it enters a pesantren. Prior literature has often moved too quickly from religion to entrepreneurship without

examining this mediating step (Gümüşay, 2015; Kumar et al., 2022; Van Buren et al., 2020). Research on values and religion in organizations makes a related point: moral coherence is not a given of faith but is sustained through value articulation, narrative framing, and ethical interpretation (Askeland et al., 2019; Butcher & Hallward, 2018). What earlier studies tend to understate is the communicative labor required to make entrepreneurial action legitimate rather than disruptive within pesantren life. In this sense, the findings extend the humane entrepreneurship perspective (Anggadwita et al., 2021), which links spirituality, innovation, and social awareness, by showing that spiritual framing must be communicated and made institutionally recognizable before it can shape entrepreneurial practice.

Everyday Communication, Participatory Routines, and Organizational Discipline

The second finding shows that santripreneurship develops through everyday organizational communication rather than through formal curriculum alone. Entrepreneurial capacity is built through daily task sharing, supervision, and repeated interaction among caregivers, administrators, and santri. This participatory communication process functions as ongoing capacity building and gradually shifts santri from passive learners into accountable economic actors.

This is most visible at Al Fitroh, where the Millennial Santri Tani Group rotates twenty-five santri through feeding, cleaning, and health-monitoring schedules across poultry, rice, corn, shallot, and carp cultivation. Frequent, structured coordination normalizes role allocation and mutual obligation, embedding entrepreneurship in daily life. At Al Munawwir Krapyak, the cooperative (through Diksarkop, the minimarket, the JNE service, and the bookshop) empowers santri through managed participation and delegated responsibility, which is less labor-intensive but still structured. At Sunan Pandanaran, handicraft production and internal business units (minimarket, canteen, cooperative, and laundry) exist, but participation is more restricted and concentrated among administrators and select groups, which limits its empowering reach.

The broader pattern is as follows. Where activity is sustained through dense routine and collective responsibility, empowerment is deeper and entrepreneurship becomes socially embedded (Al Fitroh). Where participation is organizationally mediated, empowerment is real but narrower (Al Munawwir Krapyak). Where exposure exists without routinization, empowerment remains thin (Sunan Pandanaran). Coordination challenges also persist across sites. At Al Munawwir Krapyak, mobilizing santri into stable roles and sustaining consistent digital communication remain difficult. At Krapyak Ali Maksum, effectiveness depends on committee coordination and senior approval. At Sunan Pandanaran, expanding participation has outpaced control; as one informant noted, unregistered sellers at routine gatherings have become difficult for the pesantren to manage. Santripreneurship, in short, is not sustained by discourse alone but by repeated coordination and supervised participation that convert moral encouragement into empowering, routine practice.

These patterns complicate the dominant view of empowerment communication. Existing work emphasizes dialogue, participation, and trust as conditions that enable agency and collective action (Sulaiman & Ahmadi, 2020). In the pesantren cases, however, communication does not only open participation; it also sorts, disciplines, and concentrates it. At Al Fitroh, rotating tasks and collective labor embed entrepreneurship in daily life, but as much through obligation and supervision as through agency. At Al Munawwir Krapyak, cooperative-based training creates entrepreneurial exposure that students do not enter with equal intensity. At Sunan Pandanaran, opportunity is narrower still, concentrated among administrators and select groups. Empowerment communication in pesantren is thus enabling and disciplinary at once,

participatory and selective. This ambivalence is lost when participation is treated as uniformly emancipatory rather than shaped by differentiation and institutional control.

Organizational routine sharpens this argument. Entrepreneurship becomes durable not when it is publicly promoted but when it is absorbed into recurring structures of work, supervision, and responsibility (Wolthuis et al., 2020). This is also why entrepreneurship discourse can sound similar across institutions while producing very different outcomes. Seminars, curricular references, motivational talk, and platform introductions may all signal innovation without carrying equal organizational weight. Where entrepreneurship is tied to repeated task allocation and mutual monitoring, it becomes part of institutional life; where it stays episodic or symbolic, it does not sediment into entrepreneurial subjectivity. This pushes the argument beyond content delivery and corrects a tendency in prior work to treat the presence of a program as evidence of institutionalized practice. Organizational communication and communicative constitution of organization (CCO) scholarship is useful here, not as abstract theory layered onto the data, but because it names a distinction the cases already make visible: communication does not merely accompany work, it determines whether that work becomes repeatable, obligatory, and socially real (Cooren et al., 2011; McPhee & Zaig, 2008; Schoeneborn, 2011; Schoeneborn et al., 2019). Studies of school communication reinforce this point: organizational goals gain force only when coordination, monitoring, and role distribution are made durable in everyday practice (Rengkaningias & Siswantoyo, 2022).

Uneven Digital Adaptation and Empowerment Infrastructure

All three pesantren recognize that entrepreneurship today requires digital and platform-based communication. Translating this awareness into practice, and into genuine digital empowerment, remains uneven, however, and depends less on access to technology than on institutional capacity to train, communicate, and normalize new practices.

Al Munawwir Krapyak shows the strongest digital orientation, using websites, social media, and online databases for both promotion and institutional visibility, which indicates stronger communicative readiness even without a fully integrated ecosystem. Sunan Pandanaran introduces digital tools (Tokopedia and Gojek) mainly at a curricular level; limited instructional continuity, competing priorities, and pandemic-era disruption have kept this exposure from becoming routinized, empowering practice. Al Fitroh remains rooted in land-based production, with strong organizational density in agriculture and poultry but limited movement toward digital market expansion.

The technopreneurship (digital startup) curriculum at Sunan Pandanaran does not appear to run as expected by either the caregivers or the current students, because the pesantren faces internal and external problems. Q.S. At-Tawbah verse 105 states:

وَقُلْ اَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَسَتُرَدُّونَ اِلٰى عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

And say: "Work, and Allah and His Messenger and the believers will see your work. You will be returned to (Allah), Who knows the unseen and the seen, and He will tell you what you used to do."

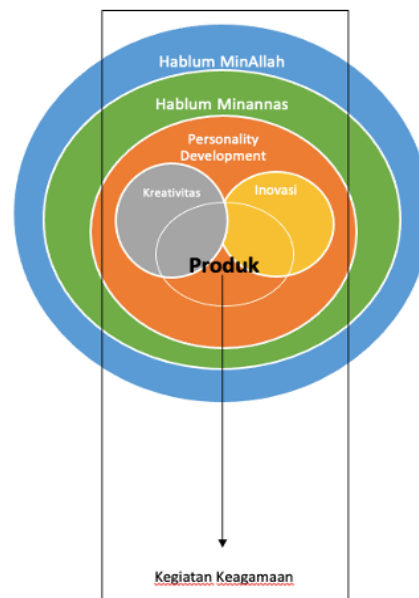
This verse frames entrepreneurial effort as accountable action witnessed by God, which helps explain why, despite the uneven implementation of the technopreneurship curriculum at Sunan Pandanaran, the pesantren continues to treat digital entrepreneurial exposure as a legitimate and encouraged undertaking rather than abandoning it altogether.

Entrepreneurship education at Sunan Pandanaran also includes teaching santri to make handicrafts, and the products may be marketed. However, marketing is limited to santri selling

to teachers who run handicraft businesses. The products have not been traded on a large scale because learning was temporarily suspended while the pandemic had not yet subsided, and existing teachers rarely provided related learning because they were occupied with accreditation.

The pesantren also has a related curriculum on marketing through digital startups. Tokopedia is intended to market the products that santri have made, and Gojek to help santri market the food and drinks they produce. In practice, however, implementation has met obstacles. Instruction remains at the stage of providing material on the history and achievements of startups, and students had to be sent home because of the pandemic. Learning about digital startups or technopreneurship is relatively new at the pesantren, having started around January 2020 (the beginning of the even semester). Educators also rarely provide technopreneurship material and are still new to implementing the curriculum. Figure 1 shows a conceptual model of entrepreneurship education that links creativity, innovation, and products to religious activities.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Entrepreneurship Education Linking Creativity, Innovation, and Products to Religious Activities



Source: Tips for Success in Building Indonesian Human Resources (Through Entrepreneurship Education and Training)

Author: Dr. Erman Suherman, S.E., M.Pd.

These differences show that digitalization cannot be reduced to the presence of technology-related material; platform awareness alone does not empower. What matters is whether institutions sustain the communicative infrastructure: the training continuity, organizational commitment, and supervisory capacity needed to convert awareness into practice. Overall, santripreneurship emerges as a layered empowerment process: it is first legitimized through moral communication, then organized through participatory routines, and finally extended or constrained by uneven digital infrastructure. Santripreneurship should thus be understood not merely as an entrepreneurship program but as a communicatively and empowerment-driven practice embedded in the moral and organizational life of pesantren.

Digital adaptation calls for the same caution. Existing literature often treats digital literacy, platform awareness, or online promotion as evidence that entrepreneurship is becoming more

contemporary and competitive (Tóth-Pajor et al., 2023). The cases here suggest that this reading can mislead, because digital discourse circulates more easily than digital practice. Tokopedia, Gojek, websites, and social media can be named and institutionally celebrated without becoming stable instruments of entrepreneurial action. The real divide is not between pesantren that know digital tools and those that do not, but between those that can routinize digital entrepreneurship and those that cannot. This difference rests on supervisory continuity, organizational commitment, communicative infrastructure, and the link between digital aspiration and actual work processes. Literature on digital entrepreneurship has often read technological visibility too readily as institutional adaptation, missing a gap between discourse and enactment that becomes especially visible in value-based institutions, where innovation must pass through existing authority structures and routine constraints (Satalkina & Steiner, 2020; Van Werven, 2023). Digital transformation research finds similar patterns elsewhere: institutions perform innovation rhetorically while lacking the communicative infrastructure and strategic coordination that durable implementation requires (Alenezi, 2023; Díaz-García et al., 2023). Pesantren-focused studies on digital transformation and pesantren-based MSMEs likewise suggest that platform use becomes meaningful only once managerial reform keeps pace with technological ambition (Chamidi et al., 2025).

Integrative Discussion: Santripreneurship as a Communicatively Constituted Practice

These patterns make an instrumental reading of santripreneurship hard to sustain. Entrepreneurship in pesantren does not move in a simple line from training to skill to output. It is communicatively constituted through three uneven, tension-filled layers: moral legitimation, organizational routine, and differential digital translation. This corrects a tendency in earlier literature to treat exposure to entrepreneurship as equivalent to entrepreneurial institutionalization, which overestimates what programs alone explain and underplays the mediating role of legitimacy and routine. The decisive distinction is not between institutions that run entrepreneurship initiatives and those that do not, but between institutions where communication turns moral authority into repeatable participation and those where entrepreneurial discourse remains thin, selective, or weakly sedimented. Seen this way, pesantren are not simply sites where entrepreneurship is promoted; they are organizational environments where entrepreneurial possibility is negotiated, authorized, constrained, and selectively stabilized.

This carries a broader disciplinary implication. Communication scholarship has tended to privilege media, campaigns, public discourse, and state–community development, and it has given less sustained attention to how religious educational institutions produce order through everyday communication. Pesantren make visible a form of communicative organization in which legitimacy, discipline, participation, and innovation are inseparable from moral authority. At the same time, these findings caution against romanticizing Islamic values as sufficient drivers of entrepreneurial transformation on their own, because their effect depends on how they are narrated, distributed, supervised, and routinized. What emerges is not a single model of santripreneurship but a differentiated field of entrepreneurial formation in which communication works as both possibility and limit.

The analysis has limits worth naming. It draws on three pesantren in one regional setting and does not claim representativeness across the diversity of pesantren in Indonesia. The material is also stronger at the level of institutional pattern than micro-interaction. Fuller quotation, closer observational sequences, and comparison across pesantren of different scale, gender composition, or economic orientation would sharpen how authority, participation, and

entrepreneurial discipline are enacted in situ, and could move this line of analysis from institutional pattern toward interactional mechanism.

Conclusion

This study examined how santripreneurship is communicatively formed in three Islamic boarding schools in Yogyakarta: Al Fitroh, Al Munawwir Krapyak, and Sunan Pandanaran. The findings show that santripreneurship develops through three interrelated communicative layers. First, entrepreneurship is rendered legitimate through moral narratives and religious exemplars that reframe economic activity as compatible with piety and service. Second, entrepreneurial capacity is built through everyday organizational communication, participatory routines, and task sharing that gradually shift santri from passive learners into accountable economic actors. Third, digital entrepreneurship remains unevenly developed, depending less on access to technology than on each pesantren's communicative infrastructure and institutional capacity to sustain training and coordination. These findings answer the central question of the study: santripreneurship is not a fixed program but a layered, communicatively constituted institutional practice whose depth and reach vary with how moral authority, organizational routine, and digital capacity are communicated and sustained.

Theoretically, this study extends the concepts of humane entrepreneurship and empowerment communication by showing that religious legitimation and organizational communication operate as sequential, mutually reinforcing mechanisms rather than isolated factors, which offers a communicative lens for understanding entrepreneurial institutionalization in faith-based settings. Practically, pesantren that seek to strengthen santripreneurship should invest not only in curricular content but also in sustained communicative infrastructure, such as structured mentoring, participatory task routines, and continuous digital training, to translate moral encouragement into durable entrepreneurial practice. The study is limited by its focus on three pesantren in a single region, which restricts claims of representativeness across Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, and by its emphasis on institutional-level patterns rather than fine-grained interactional data. Future research should extend the analysis through comparative studies across regions and institutional types and through closer interactional analysis, to clarify how communication sustains or constrains entrepreneurial empowerment in religious educational settings.

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