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## Developing a Business Unit Diversification Model Based on Santri Empowerment to Achieve Economic Self-Reliance in Islamic Boarding Schools


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**ABSTRACT**

***Introduction***: *Traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, particularly Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), are experiencing an institutional paradigm shift driven by financial sustainability challenges and dependence on external funding. This study aims to formulate and explain the Santri Empowerment-Based Business Unit Diversification Model at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung Banyuwangi to achieve institutional economic independence.*
***Methods***: *This study adopted a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with pesantren leaders (kiai), cooperative administrators (Koppontren AUSATH), business unit managers, and santri, supplemented by passive participant observation and document analysis. Data analysis was performed interactively through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Source and method triangulation were employed to ensure data trustworthiness and validity*
***Results***: *The findings reveal that santri empowerment is executed in phased stages through competency- and motivation-based recruitment, pre-membership training, learning by doing, task delegation with gradual autonomy, and regular deliberation sessions. The diversification of business units across productive and semi-productive sectors is driven by market opportunities, internal santri needs, alumni network support (DASCO), and monthly performance evaluations. This synergy successfully establishes operational independence in funding routine pesantren expenses, strengthens the socio-economic resilience of santri, and provides self-sustained internal services and facilities. Nevertheless, key challenges include time constraints faced by santri due to academic obligations and variations in managerial capacities.*
***Conclusion and suggestion***: *The economic independence of*

*Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung is achieved through the integration of santri empowerment, business unit diversification, the spiritual leadership of the kiai, and alumni network engagement, formulated into a Faith-Based Dynamic Hybrid Model. Future research is recommended to test the applicability of this model across different pesantren typologies using comparative or mixed-methods approaches to enhance external validity and model generalizability.*

***Keywords:*** Diversification, Santri Empowerment, Economic Selfv Reliance

***Paper type:* *Research paper***



## INTRODUCTION

Traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, particularly pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), have undergone a profound institutional paradigm shift over the past decade. Historically, pesantren have been widely recognized as strongholds of moral values, centers for the transmission of Islamic religious knowledge (tafaqquh fi al-din), and institutions for the formation of spiritual character (Kunhibava et al., 2024; Yasmeen, 2026). However, in response to changing societal dynamics, the disruption of the global socio-economic landscape, and the growing challenge of financial sustainability, the role of pesantren can no longer be confined to a single interpretive framework. Contemporary pesantren are increasingly expected to transform their strategic role into engines of community economic empowerment and key drivers of sustainable institutional self-reliance (KochanPillai, 2026; Zahriyah et al., 2025). The historical dependence of religious institutions on external funding, philanthropic donations, and government subsidies has proven vulnerable to operational uncertainty and has constrained institutional managerial autonomy (Islam, A. et al., 2025; Smagulova, G., & Goncalves, 2023). Consequently, the consolidation of internal economic potential through the establishment and strengthening of productive business units based on santri entrepreneurship has become an imperative agenda.

Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School in Banyuwangi represents a concrete example of an Islamic entrepreneurial institution that successfully integrates the tradition of Islamic scholarship with modern economic governance and institutional self-reliance. Through the Islamic Boarding School Cooperative (Koppontren AUSATH) and the Darussalam Smart Corporation alumni network (DASCO), Darussalam Blokagung has not only developed business units to meet the communal needs of thousands of santri, but has also established a diversified and integrated business ecosystem (Mufid, M., Dewi & Viphindrartin, 2025). Its business units operate across multiple sectors, including retail, garment manufacturing, information technology services (Ausath Net), printing and office stationery (Ausath ATK), bottled drinking water production, and integrated logistics services (Fauroni & Haris, 2025). Notably, these business activities are managed by positioning santri as the primary participatory actors through a structured system of service assignments and entrepreneurial engagement, thereby embedding practical entrepreneurial learning within the institutional ecosystem of the pesantren.

Student (santri) empowerment in the management of pesantren business enterprises presents a unique dynamic that distinguishes it from conventional corporate entrepreneurial management practices. On the one hand, santri are bound by religious obligations, disciplined Islamic learning routines, and institutional norms under the guidance of the kiai's spiritual leadership. On the other hand, they are expected to acquire modern managerial competencies, operational technical skills, financial literacy, and the ability to identify and respond to highly competitive market opportunities (Kuncoro, E. A., & SE, 2022; Otwako, P. O., & Anyieni, 2024). Previous studies have frequently highlighted the existence of paradoxical tension between profit orientation and social-spiritual mission within Islamic social entrepreneurship organizations (Beh et al., 2026; Faruq & Hoque, 2026). However, the experience of Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School demonstrates that these two orientations can be harmonized through the development of functional self-reliance, in which economic sustainability and religious-social objectives reinforce one another.

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are not merely educational institutions that transmit Islamic knowledge, but have increasingly developed into social and economic institutions with significant potential to contribute to community empowerment and local economic development. The existence of pesantren within communities provides a strategic foundation for integrating religious education, entrepreneurship, economic empowerment, and social development. In this context, the economic independence of pesantren has become increasingly important because the sustainability of educational and social programs cannot depend entirely on external funding or conventional sources of institutional financing. Economic self-reliance encourages pesantren to develop productive activities that generate sustainable income while simultaneously strengthening the entrepreneurial capacity of their human resources (Azizah & Hasan, 2022; Fasa et al., 2022). The potential for pesantren-based economic development is closely related to the large number of students (*santri*) who constitute an important institutional resource. Santri are not only recipients of religious education but can also become productive human resources when equipped with entrepreneurial knowledge, managerial skills, financial literacy, digital competencies, and practical business experience. The empowerment of santri therefore needs to move beyond conventional educational approaches toward a model that integrates learning with productive economic activities. Such an approach is consistent with the growing emphasis on entrepreneurship education and youth economic empowerment, which position young people as actors of economic development rather than merely beneficiaries of economic programs (Hidayat et al., 2023; Narmaditya et al., 2021).

One of the challenges faced by many pesantren is the limited diversification of their business units. Some pesantren have established business activities such as cooperatives, grocery stores, food production, agriculture, livestock, laundry services, printing, and small-scale trading. However, these activities are frequently operated independently, have limited market orientation, and remain dependent on traditional management practices. Consequently, the existence of business units does not automatically guarantee economic independence. Business diversification needs to be designed systematically by considering the internal resources of pesantren, the competencies of santri, market opportunities, technological developments, and the characteristics of the surrounding community. A diversified business portfolio can reduce institutional dependence on a single source of income while creating wider opportunities for santri to participate directly in productive economic activities (Kholis et al., 2022; Maulana & Zulfikar, 2024). Business unit diversification can also function as an educational instrument. When santri are directly involved in the management of productive enterprises, they gain experiential knowledge concerning business planning, production, marketing, financial management, customer relations, risk management, and innovation. This learning process can create an entrepreneurial ecosystem within pesantren in which economic activities are integrated with the institution's educational mission. Entrepreneurship education that combines theoretical learning with practical experience has been found to strengthen entrepreneurial intentions and competencies among young people, particularly when students are given opportunities to engage in authentic business activities (Wardana et al., 2021; Ratten & Jones, 2021). Therefore, the development of pesantren business units should not be viewed exclusively as a financial strategy but also as a mechanism for developing the productive capacity and economic agency of santri.

The rapid development of the digital economy further expands opportunities for pesantren to diversify their business activities. Digital platforms have reduced geographical barriers to market access and enabled small and community-based enterprises to reach consumers through e-commerce, social media, digital payment systems, and online marketing. For pesantren, digitalization creates opportunities to transform conventional business units into more competitive and market-oriented enterprises. Santri, who are generally familiar with digital technologies, can play an important role in developing digital marketing, content creation, online sales, customer engagement, and business analytics. Digital entrepreneurship has increasingly become an important component of youth empowerment because technological competencies can be converted into economic opportunities and new business models (Kraus et al., 2021; Secundo et al., 2021). Nevertheless, digitalization alone does not guarantee the success of pesantren economic enterprises. The implementation of business diversification requires institutional governance, appropriate organizational structures, human-resource development, financial accountability, and clear separation between educational and commercial functions. Without effective governance, the expansion of business units may create operational inefficiencies, financial risks, and conflicts of interest. Therefore, a pesantren economic empowerment model needs to incorporate institutional governance as an essential component. Good governance can strengthen transparency, accountability, strategic decision-making, and the sustainability of business operations (Shah et al., 2022; Wahyudi et al., 2023).

From an Islamic economic perspective, economic self-reliance should not be interpreted solely as the ability to generate financial profit. Economic activities conducted within pesantren should reflect Islamic principles, including justice, trustworthiness, social responsibility, halal production, ethical transactions, and the achievement of collective welfare. Business diversification can therefore be positioned as an instrument for realizing *maslahah* by strengthening institutional sustainability while simultaneously improving the capabilities and welfare of santri and the surrounding community. The integration of entrepreneurship with Islamic values provides pesantren with a distinctive economic development framework that differs from purely profit-oriented business models (Beik & Arsyianti, 2021; Ascarya et al., 2023). The concept of santri empowerment is particularly important because economic independence cannot be achieved merely through the establishment of business units without developing the human resources responsible for managing them. Empowerment involves increasing knowledge, skills, access to resources, decision-making capacity, and confidence to participate in economic activities. In this regard, santri empowerment should encompass several dimensions, including entrepreneurial competence, managerial capability, financial literacy, digital literacy, innovation capacity, and leadership. A comprehensive empowerment process can transform santri from passive participants into active economic actors who contribute to the development of pesantren enterprises (Sari et al., 2022; Setiawan et al., 2024).

The need for an integrated diversification model becomes increasingly relevant because pesantren possess different resources and market environments. A pesantren located in an agricultural area, for example, may have greater potential for developing agribusiness, livestock, food processing, or agricultural supply businesses. Meanwhile, pesantren located in urban areas may have greater opportunities in retail, culinary businesses, digital services, education services, creative industries, and e-commerce. Therefore, business diversification cannot rely on a uniform model. It needs to be developed based on institutional potential, local economic characteristics, santri competencies, market demand, and available infrastructure. A context-based approach can increase the feasibility and sustainability of business units while reducing the risk of adopting business models that are inconsistent with local conditions (Nugroho et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2025). Despite the growing attention to pesantren economic development, an important research gap remains concerning how business unit diversification can be systematically integrated with santri empowerment to achieve sustainable economic self-reliance. Existing studies frequently discuss pesantren entrepreneurship, cooperative development, halal businesses, or digitalization separately. Less attention has been given to the development of an integrated model that connects business diversification, santri empowerment, institutional governance, digital transformation, and economic self-reliance within a single framework. This gap indicates the need for a conceptual and empirical model that explains how pesantren can optimize their internal human resources and institutional assets through diversified business activities.

Although research on the pesantren economy has been widely published, most existing studies remain predominantly descriptive and partial, focusing on the general entrepreneurial potential of pesantren without systematically explaining the taxonomy of student empowerment processes and the technical mechanisms of business diversification (Kriegel, 2026; Ulfatul et al., 2026). A significant literature gap persists regarding how business ideas evolve from cultural directives or innovative initiatives proposed by santri into formal business units that are adaptive, sustainable, and governed through deliberative evaluation systems. Furthermore, no comprehensive conceptual model has been developed to explain the interaction between the charismatic leadership of the kiai, the managerial autonomy of santri, alumni networks, and community empowerment within an integrated business diversification framework. To address this academic gap, the present study aims to formulate and comprehensively elaborate a Student Empowerment-Based Business Unit Diversification Model at Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School. The analysis focuses on five principal dimensions: (1) the mechanisms and processes of student empowerment from recruitment to the achievement of functional self-reliance; (2) the decision-making framework and business diversification cycle for productive and semi-productive business units; (3) the managerial roles of santri and the alumni network (DASCO) in strengthening business resilience; (4) the multi-sectoral impact of business diversification on institutional operational self-reliance and community socio-economic resilience; and (5) the formulation of a new theoretical model that integrates the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Capital Theory within the context of contemporary pesantren entrepreneurship.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, particularly pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), have undergone a profound institutional paradigm shift over the past decade. Historically, pesantren have been widely recognized as strongholds of moral values, centers for the transmission of Islamic religious knowledge (tafaqquh fi al-din), and institutions for the formation of spiritual character (Kunhibava et al., 2024; Yasmeen, 2026). However, in response to changing societal dynamics, the disruption of the global socio-economic landscape, and the growing challenge of financial sustainability, the role of pesantren can no longer be confined to a single interpretive framework. Contemporary pesantren are increasingly expected to transform their strategic role into engines of community economic empowerment and key drivers of sustainable institutional self-reliance (KochanPillai, 2026; Zahriyah et al., 2025). The historical dependence of religious institutions on external funding, philanthropic donations, and government subsidies has proven vulnerable to operational uncertainty and has constrained institutional managerial autonomy (Islam, A. et al., 2025; Smagulova, G., & Goncalves, 2023). Consequently, the consolidation of internal economic potential through the establishment and strengthening of productive business units based on santri entrepreneurship has become an imperative agenda.

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## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the construction of a student empowerment-based business unit diversification model in achieving the economic self-reliance of Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School, Banyuwangi, East Java. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to uncover the focus, depth, and relevance of complex social phenomena through rich, experience-centered insights that are difficult to capture using quantitative methods alone (Lim, 2025). The exploratory case study design was chosen because it provides a comprehensive understanding of institutional dynamics, decision-making processes, entrepreneurial values, and student empowerment practices that evolve within the pesantren environment, as also demonstrated by previous case studies linking santri empowerment to the strengthening of local economic self-reliance (Ahwarumi & Munir, 2026). The research site was focused on the Islamic Boarding School Cooperative (Koppontren AUSATH) and the various business units operating under its management. Research informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the planning, management, and implementation of the pesantren's economic activities. The informants included the pesantren leader (kiai), cooperative administrators, business unit managers, santri assigned to productive and semi-productive business units, and business partners from the surrounding community and alumni network.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, passive participant observation, and document analysis, allowing the study to generate contextual and multidimensional evidence. The interviews explored business diversification strategies, mechanisms of santri empowerment, institutional management practices, and the challenges and opportunities associated with the economic development of the pesantren. Observations focused on the daily operations of business units, student training processes, managerial coordination meetings, and interactions among santri, managers, and customers. Document analysis was conducted to examine organizational structures, financial reports, operational procedures, and other institutional documents. The combination of these data sources reflects a fundamental characteristic of case study research, which requires the use of two or more sources of evidence to strengthen the understanding of the case under investigation (Schlunegger et al., 2024). Data were analyzed interactively through the stages of data reduction, data display, categorization of findings, and iterative conclusion drawing until a conceptual model representing the relationship between business unit diversification, santri empowerment, and the economic self-reliance of the pesantren was developed. The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation, which are widely recognized strategies for enhancing the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of qualitative research while mitigating the limitations associated with relying on a single source of evidence (Schlunegger, Zumstein-Shaha, & Palm, 2024; Lim, 2024). Consequently, the study achieved a high level of credibility, consistency, and trustworthiness.

## RESULT AND ANALYSIS

### Student Empowerment in Semi-Productive Sectors

The recruitment stage represents the initial phase in which santri join service-based work units within the pesantren. This stage exhibits a flexible pattern and is highly dependent on the leadership and operational needs of each division. Rather than applying a uniform institutional standard, recruitment criteria are tailored to the technical requirements and distinctive characteristics of each service unit. As explained by Yusri: "The criteria depend on the respective unit.  The empowerment of santri within the pesantren service units does not begin when they are formally assigned to a particular department or work unit. Rather, the process is deliberately designed from the early stages of institutional development through a structured training program. During this phase, students are introduced not only to the technical aspects of the work but also to the values of discipline, responsibility, and work ethic. The duration of the training period varies across service units according to operational requirements. In the Darussalam Multimedia Unit, for example, training is conducted over several months.

The empowerment of santri within the pesantren business units is implemented gradually through structured process that begins with pre-membership training, which serves as a basic orientation program, followed by learning by doing or experiential learning, enabling students to understand operational workflows through direct practice. As their competencies develop, santri are gradually entrusted with greater task autonomy and responsibility while continuing to receive guidance through regular musyawarah (deliberative meetings) with supervisors, which function as forums for discussion, clarification, and collaborative problem-solving. Throughout this process, santri are also given opportunities to become implementers of their own business ideas when their proposals are considered feasible, thereby encouraging internal creativity and innovation. Despite these various forms of empowerment, all business activities remain firmly embedded within the value system of the pesantren, where religious learning (ngaji) remains the primary obligation. Consequently, work activities function as a means of capacity development without diminishing the students' spiritual commitment.

Experiential learning, or learning by doing, constitutes the principal method of student empowerment within the pesantren business units. Rather than relying on extensive formal training, santri develop their competencies through direct work experience, real problem-solving, customer interaction, and independent decision-making. This process enables their abilities to evolve organically as they become increasingly involved in business operations, making learning highly contextual and practice-oriented.  The process of business diversification at Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School (Pesantren) is driven by several interrelated factors. The findings indicate that diversification emerged from the availability of market opportunities resulting from the increasing needs of both santri and the surrounding community. In addition, diversification was strategically pursued to strengthen the pesantren's economic self-reliance and reduce dependence on external funding sources. It also functions as a form of economic protection for students, aimed at sustaining educational financing and improving student welfare through internally generated financial resources. Furthermore, business development has been designed with attention to inter-unit interconnectedness, allowing individual business units to support one another and thereby creating a more stable and sustainable pesantren economic ecosystem.

Market opportunities constitute one of the strongest driving forces behind the pesantren's business diversification strategy. The pesantren management closely observed both the dynamics of the local Banyuwangi economy and the internal needs of santri as productive opportunities that could be transformed into viable business ventures. Within the context of Banyuwangi's rapidly growing tourism sector, increasing mobility among residents and tourists generated a stable demand for transportation services. At the same time, the logistical needs of thousands of santri created new business opportunities that had previously been unavailable. the external needs of the wider community and the internal needs of santri. The pesantren successfully identified opportunities arising from increasing tourist mobility while simultaneously recognizing students' logistical difficulties in sending packages to their families. Diversification driven by both external and internal demand indicates that the pesantren is oriented not only toward profitability but also toward providing relevant and solution-oriented services. By capitalizing on tangible and measurable market opportunities, the pesantren has been able to develop business units that support institutional economic self-reliance while simultaneously generating direct benefits for its internal community.

Student empowerment in semi-productive sectors represents a strategic approach to strengthening the economic capacity of *santri* through business activities that combine educational functions with limited-scale productive practices. Semi-productive sectors may include cooperative management, small-scale retail, culinary production, laundry services, printing, digital services, handicrafts, agriculture, and other activities that can be operated within the pesantren environment. Through direct participation, santri are encouraged to develop practical competencies in production, marketing, customer service, financial administration, and basic business management. This approach transforms santri from passive recipients of education into active participants in institutional economic activities, while maintaining the primary educational mission of the pesantren. The empowerment process should be implemented through structured training, mentoring, job rotation, and direct involvement in business-unit operations. Santri can be assigned responsibilities according to their interests and competencies, such as production, finance, marketing, inventory management, digital promotion, or customer relations. Such involvement provides experiential learning that enables students to understand the relationship between planning, implementation, evaluation, and business performance. In addition, semi-productive activities can become a practical laboratory for developing entrepreneurial attitudes, including discipline, creativity, responsibility, teamwork, problem-solving, and risk awareness. The integration of entrepreneurship education with practical experience is important because entrepreneurial competencies are more effectively developed when learners have opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in real economic situations (Narmaditya et al., 2021; Wardana et al., 2021). Consequently, semi-productive sectors can serve as a bridge between education and economic empowerment, creating a mutually reinforcing relationship in which business units support santri development while competent santri contribute to the sustainability and independence of pesantren enterprises (Secundo et al., 2021; Sari et al., 2022).

**The Role of Santri in Achieving Economic Self-Reliance**

Business diversification within the pesantren has generated impacts that extend beyond economic performance by creating opportunities for santri to participate actively in both the operational and managerial dimensions of business units. Such participation constitutes a critical component in fostering self-reliance at both the individual and institutional levels, as santri function not merely as consumers but also as economic actors who contribute directly to organizational sustainability and development. The business diversification strategy developed by the pesantren has generated various forms of institutional self-reliance encompassing operational, socio-economic, and internal service dimensions. Operational self-reliance is reflected in the institution’s ability to finance its daily operational needs without depending on external assistance. In addition, the business units contribute to the socio-economic resilience of santri by providing financial incentives and reducing educational costs. At the same time, the pesantren has become capable of independently providing facilities and infrastructure through its internally managed business units. Overall, these findings indicate that the pesantren has evolved into a more self-reliant and sustainable educational institution. Operational self-reliance represents one of the most tangible outcomes of the pesantren’s business diversification strategy, as revenue generated from various business units has become sufficient to support the institution’s routine operational expenditures without reliance on external funding.

This finding demonstrates that business innovation is supported by a structured evaluation system. Proposals for new business units emerge from routine deliberative meetings and are subsequently assessed through strategic planning and budgeting before implementation. The process reflects a systematic and evidence-based decision-making mechanism in the development of pesantren business enterprises. Overall, market research and innovation constitute critical factors in ensuring the success of the pesantren’s business diversification strategy. By integrating market analysis with a structured evaluation process, the institution is able to develop business units that are relevant, competitive, and sustainable, thereby strengthening its long-term economic self-reliance. One of the major challenges in achieving pesantren economic self-reliance lies in the quality and availability of human resources, particularly in the management of business units. The sustainability of diversified business activities depends not only on financial capital and market opportunities but also on the willingness, competence, and commitment of santri to participate in operational and managerial responsibilities. This statement demonstrates that managerial quality is a critical factor in determining the sustainability of business units. Inadequate management capacity can directly contribute to business failure, as illustrated by the closure of one of the retail units. Overall, the challenges related to human resources indicate that pesantren economic self-reliance depends not only on the existence of diversified business units but also on the quality, preparedness, professionalism, and managerial competence of santri in operating and sustaining those enterprises.

**Student Empowerment at Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School**

Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School (Pesantren) functions not only as an educational institution that emphasizes religious and formal education but also as an institution with a broader mission of fostering the long-term economic self-reliance of its santri (students). The pesantren recognizes that students’ needs extend beyond classroom learning and encompass the development of life skills that can serve as valuable assets when they return to society. Consequently, Darussalam Blokagung has continuously developed an educational model that is oriented not only toward spiritual character formation but also toward strengthening the economic capacity of santri, including after they become alumni. This commitment demonstrates that the pesantren seeks to nurture students comprehensively across multiple dimensions of life. As discussed in the previous chapter, one concrete manifestation of this institutional commitment is the active involvement of santri in service assignments (pengabdian) and the management of the pesantren's business units. The system and model implemented are based on the principles of both student self-reliance and institutional self-reliance, ensuring that economic activities are not directed solely toward financial profit. This is reflected in business development policies that prioritize the welfare and benefit (maslahah) of santri over commercial profit maximization. Thus, the pesantren business units function not only as sources of institutional income but also as economic learning laboratories that provide students with practical experience, managerial responsibility, and preparation for independent living within society. Student empowerment within the pesantren's service and business units can be broadly categorized into two main types, namely productive business units and semi-productive service units. Both forms of empowerment exhibit similar patterns across several core processes, including recruitment, training, experiential learning, supervision, and the gradual delegation of responsibility. The comparison of these empowerment patterns is summarized in Table 1, which presents the principal characteristics of productive and semi-productive student empowerment within Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School.

**Table 1. Comparison of Empowerment Elements in Semi-Productive and Productive Sectors**

| Element | Semi-Productive Sector Empowerment | Productive Sector Empowerment |
|---|---|---|
| Recruitment | Candidate eligibility criteria (educational background, technical competence, and financial need),<br>Training period and administrative procedures,<br>Santri motivation (service, skill development, and economic considerations) | Candidate eligibility ceriteria,<br>Recruitment process,<br>Formalization of service status. |
| Empowerment | Pre-membership orientation,<br>Learning by doing,<br>Task allocation,<br>Task autonomy,<br>Problem-solving,<br>Deliberation among members,<br>Freelance work opportunities. | Pre-membership orientation,<br>Learning by doing,<br>Task autonomy,<br>Deliberation with supervisors,<br>Collaboration with supervisor,<br>Idea implementation while prioritizing religious (ngaji),<br>Acceptance of creative ideas. |
| Mentoring & Evaluation | Senior Mentoring,<br>Monthly Reporting,<br>Monthly Coordination Forum. | Senior Mentoring,<br>External Training,<br>Santri Participation and Monthly Coordination Forums. |

| Element | Semi-Productive Sector Empowerment | Productive Sector Empowerment |
|---|---|---|
| Empowerment Outcomes | Economic Empowerment, Psychological and Skill Development, Self-Reliance and Sustainability, Post-Pesantren Impact, Empowerment of the Surrounding Community. | Economic Empowerment, Skill Mastery and Capacity Development, Sustained Religious Study (Ngaji) and Formal, Education Empowerment of the Surrounding Community. |

Data source: Primary data, 2026

Based on Table 1, the empowerment patterns observed in both sectors appear to be largely identical, particularly in their strong emphasis on the learning by doing mechanism. This experiential learning pattern is consistent with contemporary research demonstrating that experiential learning approaches in vocational and entrepreneurship training are highly effective in developing youth entrepreneurial competencies, especially when combined with gradual mentoring and increasing levels of task autonomy as participants become more mature and competent (Mayombe, 2024).

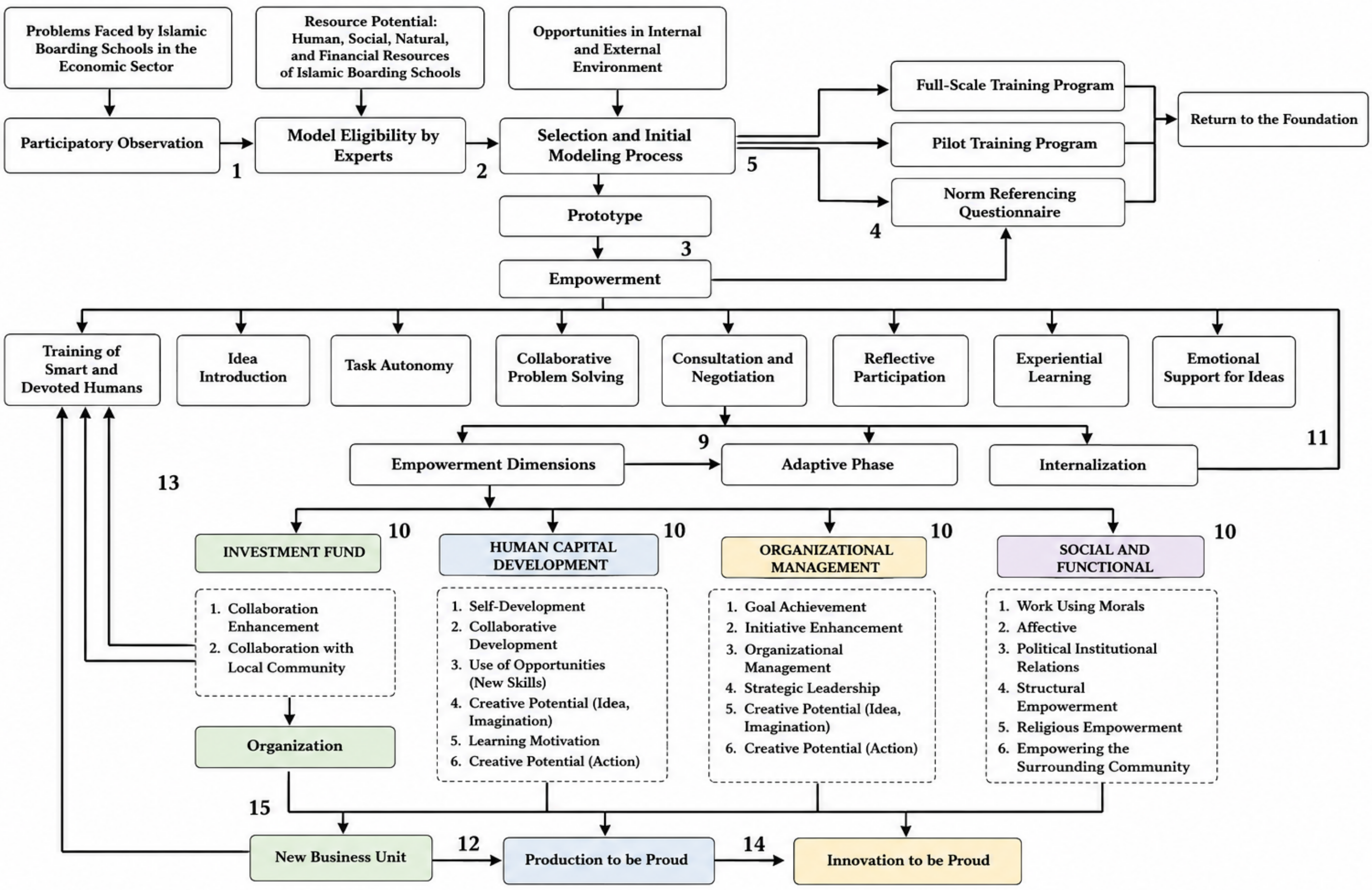


**Figure 1. Blokagung Santri Empowerment Model**

The figure illustrates the comprehensive cycle of the Blokagung Santri Empowerment Model, which integrates four major stages: (1) participatory motivation and recruitment, (2) selection, training, and placement, (3) experiential empowerment and adaptive development, and (4) institutional outcomes, ultimately leading to capacity enhancement, business unit diversification, and the functional independence of santri. The model demonstrates that student empowerment is not treated as a one-time training intervention, but rather as a continuous institutional process in which recruitment based on motivation, competency-based selection, experiential work placement, mentoring, and reflective participation are interconnected within a dynamic empowerment cycle. This cyclical pattern beginning with motivation-based recruitment, followed by authentic work placement, and culminating in reflective mentoring and adaptive development is consistent with experiential pedagogy models in entrepreneurship education, which have been shown to enhance entrepreneurial learning outcomes and long-term competency development in the context of developing countries (Udeozor et al., 2025).

**Business Diversification Model at Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School**

The figure illustrates the comprehensive Blokagung Santri Empowerment Model, which integrates four major stages. The model begins with a recruitment process based on participatory motivation and structural eligibility criteria, followed by an empowerment stage through work placement and technical competency development. It is subsequently strengthened through continuous mentoring, which incorporates deliberative consultation (musyawarah) and experiential learning, ultimately leading to outcomes in the form of capacity enhancement, business unit diversification, and the functional independence of santri. These four stages constitute the principal findings of this study and will be discussed in detail in the following subsections to explain how this empowerment mechanism evolves from a series of technical activities into a systematic model of institutional self-reliance.

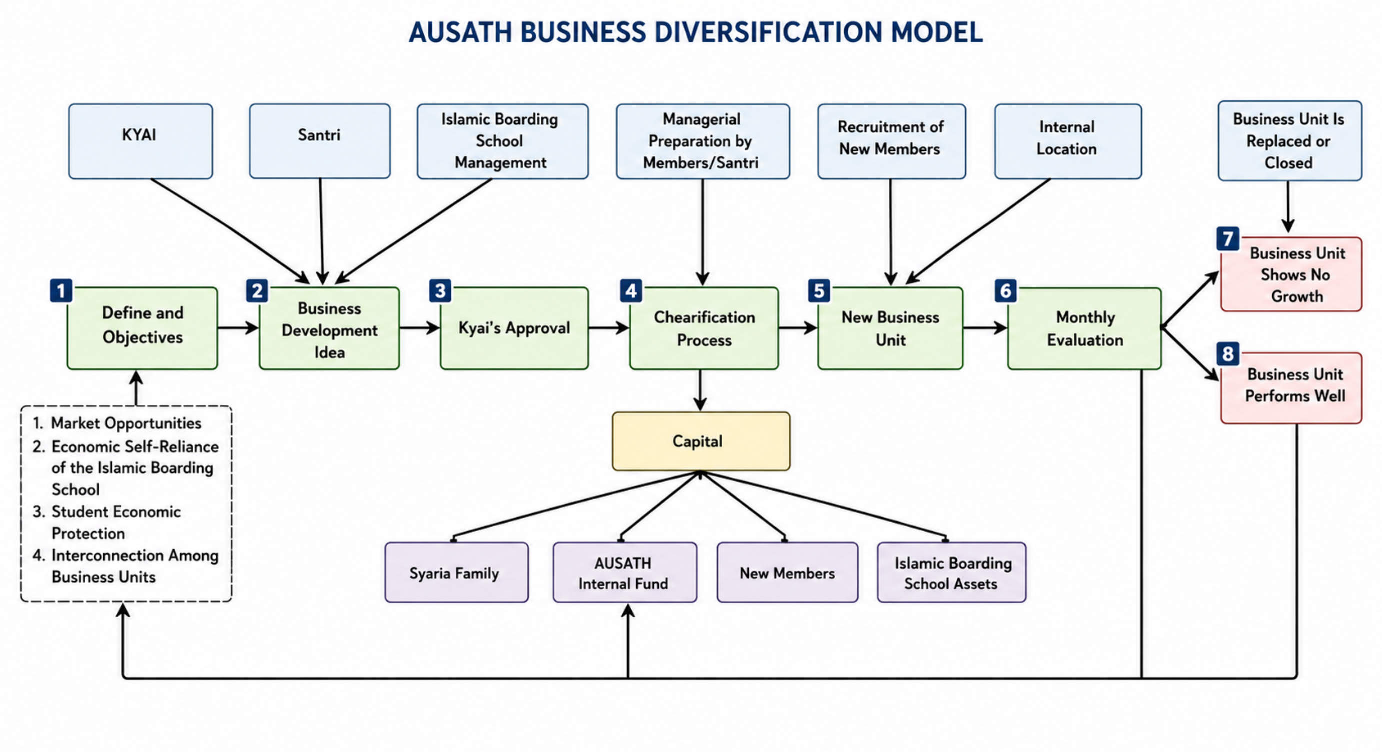


**Figure 2. AUSATH Business Diversification Model**

Strategic stages, beginning with the synchronization of development ideas proposed by the Kyai, santri, and institutional administrators. This contextual diversification pattern demonstrates that business expansion decisions within a social–spiritual institution cannot be interpreted through the same logic as conventional corporate diversification, because the legitimacy, strategic direction, and implementation of diversification are fundamentally shaped by the institution's organizational context, religious values, and social mission (Bhawe, N., & Jha, 2024). Rather than being driven solely by profit maximization, diversification within the Ausath ecosystem is embedded in the broader objectives of institutional sustainability, student empowerment, and community welfare. This finding is also consistent with evidence indicating that the integration of human resource management, inter-organizational collaboration, marketing, production, and financial management strategies constitutes a critical determinant of the sustainability and economic efficiency of pesantren-based business enterprises and residential educational institutions (Harjawati et al., 2026). Accordingly, the Ausath diversification cycle can be interpreted as a faith-based strategic management model in which entrepreneurial initiatives emerge through collaborative deliberation, are legitimized by spiritual leadership, and are institutionalized through coordinated organizational processes. Such a model highlights the distinctive capacity of pesantren entrepreneurship to transform religiously grounded social capital into a diversified and sustainable economic ecosystem.

**The Role of Santri and the Impact of Business Diversification on Economic Self-Reliance**

**The role** of santri in supporting the economic self-reliance of the pesantren constitutes one of the most substantial dimensions of the overall business management system implemented within Koppontren AUSATH. The involvement of santri extends far beyond the function of labor provision and encompasses a much broader spectrum of responsibilities, including daily operational activities, managerial administration, business innovation, and human resource regeneration through structured leadership succession and cadre development. Collectively, this pattern of participation forms a practice-based learning ecosystem that simultaneously strengthens the institutional self-reliance of the pesantren while developing the entrepreneurial and managerial capacities of santri as independent economic actors. The first and most visible dimension is the role of santri in operational and managerial functions. Interview data indicate that santri are not merely assigned to operational positions; they are also entrusted with leadership responsibilities across various business units. Ahmad Rizki Fahmi, for example, who serves as the head of the Ausath Net unit, performs a dual role by managing both technical operations and administrative reporting, while also participating in routine coordination meetings with the heads of other business units. Similarly, Sukron Abdul Hamid, as the head of the Ausath ATK unit, is responsible for inventory control, team coordination, and report preparation, illustrating that santri are actively involved in organizational management rather than functioning solely as operational workers. This pattern reflects what Hackman and Oldham (1976) conceptualized as job enrichment, namely the expansion of work responsibilities to include planning, implementation, and evaluation, thereby making work more meaningful and promoting the development of higher-level competencies. Contemporary research further reinforces this interpretation by demonstrating that psychological empowerment and psychological safety generated through the delegation of meaningful responsibilities significantly enhance job crafting, defined as employees' proactive efforts to reshape their work in more meaningful and productive ways (Fernandez, S. et al., 2024). From the perspective of Situational Leadership Theory, the assignment of santri to strategic managerial positions represents a delegating leadership style applied to individuals who have attained sufficient levels of competence and maturity. Such trust-based leadership has also been shown to improve human resource management performance within Islamic higher education institutions (Sahrodi & Karim, 2025). Consequently, the empowerment model implemented in Koppontren AUSATH not only contributes to institutional economic sustainability but also functions as a leadership development mechanism that prepares santri to become future managers, entrepreneurs, and community leaders.

The efforts undertaken by Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School to achieve economic self-reliance do not rely on a single strategy; rather, they are built upon three mutually reinforcing strategies: (1) economic synergy with the alumni network through DASCO, (2) the development of business units based on market research and innovation, and (3) the engagement of the surrounding community as part of a broader economic ecosystem. These strategies collectively form a multidimensional architecture of institutional self-reliance that is not inward-looking or exclusive, but instead open, collaborative, and integrated with the wider social environment in which the pesantren operates. The first strategy, which distinguishes Darussalam Blokagung from many conventional pesantren management models, is the development of economic synergy with alumni through the DASCO network. In many educational institutions, alumni relationships are primarily sentimental and ceremonial, limited to nostalgia and occasional financial donations. Darussalam Blokagung adopts a fundamentally different approach by positioning alumni as an organic component of the pesantren’s economic ecosystem rather than as external supporters who provide incidental assistance. Through DASCO, the internal needs of the pesantren are systematically connected with the business capacities of alumni, creating reciprocal mechanisms for the supply of goods and services, cost efficiency, market expansion, and entrepreneurial collaboration. Consequently, alumni become active participants in the institutional economic system and contribute directly to the sustainability of the pesantren’s business diversification strategy.

From the perspective of Social Capital Theory, this organized alumni network represents a highly productive form of institutional social capital. Coleman (1988) distinguishes between bonding social capital, which strengthens internal trust and cohesion within a community, and bridging social capital, which provides access to external resources, information, and market opportunities. Recent research confirms that these two forms of social capital perform complementary functions: bonding social capital reinforces collective identity and internal cooperation, whereas bridging social capital facilitates entrepreneurial expansion and access to opportunities beyond the boundaries of the organization (Mickiewicz et al., 2025). DASCO performs both functions simultaneously by strengthening the relational ties between the pesantren and its alumni community while also creating bridges to external markets, business networks, and institutional partnerships. This pattern is conceptually consistent with findings that structured alumni involvement in institutional entrepreneurial ecosystems significantly enhances the sustainability of new ventures and intergenerational entrepreneurial development (Politis et al., 2024), as well as with the concept of relational governance based on social capital, which has been identified as a key determinant of the long-term sustainability of social entrepreneurship ecosystems (Murithi et al., 2025).

**The Impact of Business Diversification on Pesantren Economic Self-Reliance**

The business diversification strategy implemented by Koppontren AUSATH has contributed significantly to the realization of economic self-reliance across multiple dimensions of institutional life. This self-reliance does not emerge in a single form; rather, it manifests through three interconnected dimensions: operational self-reliance, the socio-economic resilience of santri, and self-reliance in the provision of internal services. Collectively, these dimensions constitute the foundation of a comprehensive and sustainable model of pesantren self-reliance that supports both institutional continuity and long-term organizational resilience. The first dimension is operational self-reliance, which represents the most direct outcome of business diversification. Revenue generated from various business units has become the primary source of funding for the institution's routine operational expenditures, enabling the pesantren to function in a stable and sustainable manner without dependence on external financial assistance. From the perspective of Resource Dependency Theory, organizational dependence on external actors constitutes one of the most fundamental sources of structural vulnerability (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Barney (1991) further argues within the Resource-Based View (RBV) framework that sustainable competitive advantage is derived from internal resources that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and effectively organized. This argument has been reinforced by contemporary studies in Islamic entrepreneurship, which emphasize that spiritual–community values grounded in trust, social cohesion, and the moral legitimacy of religious leadership represent unique strategic resources that are difficult for secular business entities to replicate, while simultaneously supporting institutional sustainability, inclusivity, and community-based economic development (Napitupulu, R. M. et al., 2026)

Accordingly, the operational self-reliance achieved by Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School can be interpreted not merely as financial independence, but as a form of strategic institutional autonomy generated through the accumulation and effective utilization of internal organizational resources. The diversified business portfolio developed by Koppontren AUSATH strengthens the institution's capacity to finance educational activities, maintain operational continuity, and respond adaptively to economic uncertainty without excessive reliance on government subsidies or external donors. In this sense, business diversification functions as both an economic strategy and an institutional resilience mechanism that enhances the long-term sustainability of the pesantren as a faith-based educational and entrepreneurial institution. The empirical findings from Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School provide a theoretical contribution to the literature on Islamic entrepreneurship management through the formulation of the Faith-Based Dynamic Hybrid Model. The success of the AUSATH business diversification strategy demonstrates that the spiritual patron–client relationship between the Kyai and santri does not inhibit entrepreneurial initiative; instead, it functions as a catalyst for accountability, organizational discipline, and operational efficiency. This pattern is consistent with findings from other faith-based social entrepreneurship organizations, where governance systems that combine the moral authority of spiritual leaders with formal accountability mechanisms have proven effective in preventing mission drift while simultaneously maintaining both commercial performance and social–religious objectives (Murithi et al., 2025). Furthermore, the cultural principle of sami'na wa ata'na ("we hear and we obey"), when integrated with job enrichment and delegated managerial autonomy, contributes to reducing transaction costs and moral hazard, which are commonly identified as major constraints in social entrepreneurship. This interpretation is supported by evidence that the integration of religious values into economic education within pesantren environments effectively cultivates ethical, responsible, and community-oriented economic behavior (Leyen & Gonzalez, 2026).

The integration of collective capital mobilization mechanisms and a rigorous monthly evaluation system further indicates that religious educational institutions are capable of practicing forms of modern corporate governance without compromising their spiritual identity and institutional values. Rather than representing a dichotomy between religious authority and professional management, the Blokagung model demonstrates that both dimensions can operate synergistically within a single entrepreneurial ecosystem. The Faith-Based Dynamic Hybrid Model therefore extends existing discussions on Islamic entrepreneurship by integrating Resource-Based View (RBV), Social Capital Theory, Dynamic Capabilities, and faith-based governance into a unified framework of business diversification and institutional empowerment. From a practical perspective, this model offers a scalable prototype for strengthening the economic self-reliance of Islamic boarding schools throughout Indonesia and contributes directly to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), through entrepreneurship development, employment generation, and sustainable institutional economic growth.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the economic self-reliance of Darussalam Blokagung Islamic Boarding School (Pesantren) is built through the integration of student (santri) empowerment, business unit diversification, spiritual leadership, and the pesantren's socio-economic network. Student empowerment extends beyond vocational training and develops into a managerial cadre-building process involving competency-based recruitment, learning by doing, continuous mentoring, and the delegation of operational and strategic responsibilities. This mechanism enhances students' entrepreneurial capabilities while simultaneously creating a pool of human resources that serves as the primary foundation for the development of productive and semi-productive business units. Business diversification within Koppontren AUSATH is implemented systematically through the synchronization of ideas among the kiai, administrators, santri, and the alumni network (DASCO), supported by market research, monthly evaluations, and integration across business units. This process has created a mutually reinforcing pesantren business ecosystem that strengthens operational self-reliance, improves the socio-economic resilience of santri, and enhances institutional sustainability. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in the formulation of the Faith-Based Dynamic Hybrid Model, which extends the literature on pesantren entrepreneurship by integrating the perspectives of the Resource-Based View (RBV), Social Capital Theory, and spiritual leadership into a unified framework of adaptive and sustainable business diversification. Practically, the proposed model may serve as a strategic reference for other Islamic boarding schools in designing student empowerment-based business diversification strategies and strengthening alumni networks.

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