

Repositioning Pesantren in Islamic Economics: From Educational Authority to Socio-Economic Enterprise

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<https://doi.org/10.62097/falasifa.v17i01.2995>

Received: 03-02-2026

Revised: 25-04-2026

Accepted: 31-05-2026

Info Artikel

KEYWORDS:

Pesantren;
Islamic Economics;
Socio-Economic
Enterprise;

Abstract

This study examines the transformation of pesantren within the framework of Islamic economics, focusing on their repositioning from traditional religious-educational institutions into socio-economic enterprises. While previous studies have primarily emphasized the educational and da'wah functions of pesantren, limited attention has been given to their expanding economic roles and institutional transformation. To address this gap, this study employs a qualitative library research design using a text-based analytical approach. The analysis draws upon academic literature, institutional perspectives, and regulatory frameworks, particularly Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Pesantren. The findings reveal that pesantren are increasingly integrating economic functions into their institutional structures through the establishment of cooperatives, micro-enterprises, entrepreneurial initiatives, and sharia-compliant financial activities. This development reflects the emergence of a hybrid institutional model that combines religious authority, educational functions, and socio-economic engagement within a single organizational framework. The study further demonstrates that pesantren contribute to broadening the scope of Islamic economics by promoting community-based, ethically grounded, and socially embedded economic practices. In addition, legal recognition has played a significant role in legitimizing and strengthening pesantren's economic transformation, although challenges related to governance, managerial capacity, and institutional sustainability remain substantial. This research contributes to the discourse of Islamic economics by conceptualizing pesantren as socio-economic enterprises and by offering an alternative perspective on Islamic economic institutions that emphasizes social empowerment, ethical orientation, and community resilience.

KATA KUNCI:

Pesantren;
Ekonomi Islam;
Sosio-Ekonomi Enterprise;

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji transformasi pesantren dalam kerangka ekonomi Islam dengan menyoroti reposisinya dari lembaga pendidikan-keagamaan tradisional menjadi entitas sosial-ekonomi. Kajian-kajian sebelumnya umumnya lebih menekankan fungsi pendidikan dan dakwah pesantren, sementara perhatian terhadap perluasan peran ekonomi dan transformasi kelembagaannya masih terbatas. Untuk mengisi kesenjangan tersebut, penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis berbasis teks. Analisis dilakukan dengan memanfaatkan literatur akademik, perspektif kelembagaan, dan kerangka regulasi, khususnya Undang-Undang Nomor 18 Tahun 2019 tentang Pesantren. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pesantren semakin mengintegrasikan fungsi ekonomi ke dalam struktur kelembagaannya melalui pengembangan koperasi, usaha mikro, inisiatif kewirausahaan, serta aktivitas keuangan berbasis syariah. Perkembangan ini mencerminkan munculnya model kelembagaan hibrid yang memadukan otoritas keagamaan, fungsi pendidikan,

dan keterlibatan sosial-ekonomi dalam satu kerangka organisasi. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa pesantren berkontribusi dalam memperluas cakupan ekonomi Islam melalui praktik ekonomi berbasis komunitas yang berlandaskan etika dan berakar secara sosial. Selain itu, pengakuan hukum memainkan peran penting dalam melegitimasi dan memperkuat transformasi ekonomi pesantren, meskipun tantangan terkait tata kelola, kapasitas manajerial, dan keberlanjutan kelembagaan masih menjadi persoalan yang signifikan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi terhadap diskursus ekonomi Islam dengan mengonseptualisasikan pesantren sebagai entitas sosial-ekonomi serta menawarkan perspektif alternatif mengenai institusi ekonomi Islam yang menekankan pemberdayaan sosial, orientasi etis, dan ketahanan masyarakat..

INTRODUCTION

The evolving landscape of Islamic economics has increasingly emphasized the role of institutions that integrate religious values with socio-economic functions. Within this context, pesantren Indonesia's traditional Islamic boarding schools represent a unique institutional form that is undergoing significant transformation. Historically, pesantren have functioned primarily as centers of Islamic learning, moral cultivation, and da'wah, playing a pivotal role in shaping religious authority and transmitting Islamic knowledge across generations (Ahmad, 1998; Dhofier, 1982). Their legitimacy has long been rooted in scholarly authority ('ulama), charismatic leadership, and deep social embeddedness within local communities (Nadzir, 2015). However, in the contemporary era marked by economic restructuring and demands for inclusive development, the functional scope of pesantren has expanded beyond education and religious instruction.

This transformation is neither incidental nor purely organic; rather, it reflects a broader institutional shift driven by regulatory recognition, socio-economic pressures, and the need for sustainable community development. A critical turning point in this regard is the enactment of Indonesian Law Number 18 of 2019 on Pesantren, which formally acknowledges pesantren as institutions with multifaceted roles encompassing education, da'wah, and economic empowerment (Asdlori, 2023). This legal framework not only legitimizes the economic activities of pesantren but also redefines their institutional identity within the national development agenda. Consequently, pesantren are increasingly positioned as socio-economic actors capable of contributing to grassroots economic resilience and community-based development (Rimbawan, 2012).

From the perspective of Islamic economics, this repositioning raises important theoretical and practical questions. Islamic economics has consistently advocated for an economic system grounded in ethical principles, social justice, and equitable distribution of wealth (Chapra, 2016). Yet, much of the discourse has focused on formal financial institutions, such as Islamic banks and capital markets, often overlooking the role of community-based religious institutions. In this regard, pesantren offer an alternative institutional model that operates at the intersection of religion, society, and economy (Ghlamallah et al., 2021). Their embeddedness within local communities enables them to function not merely as service providers but as catalysts for socio-economic transformation, particularly through initiatives such as micro-enterprises, cooperatives, and sharia-based financial practices.

Despite this growing relevance, the academic literature has yet to fully capture the complexity of pesantren's transformation. Classical studies have predominantly portrayed pesantren as educational and cultural institutions (Khan & Watson, 2003), emphasizing their role in preserving Islamic traditions and shaping religious identities. More recent scholarship has begun to acknowledge their involvement in economic activities; however, these studies often remain fragmented and descriptive, lacking a coherent analytical framework that situates pesantren within

the broader discourse of socio-economic enterprise (Zarkasyi, 2018). As a result, there remains a significant gap in understanding how pesantren are institutionally repositioned as hybrid entities that combine educational authority with economic functionality.

Moreover, the concept of socio-economic enterprise itself has been extensively developed in the global literature on social entrepreneurship, yet its application within the context of Islamic institutions remains under-theorized. Social enterprises are generally defined as organizations that pursue dual objectives: achieving financial sustainability while generating social impact (Mi'raj & Ulev, 2024). However, pesantren differ fundamentally from conventional social enterprises due to their religious foundation, normative orientation, and governance structure. Their economic activities are not solely driven by market logic or social mission but are also shaped by religious norms, ethical considerations, and communal obligations (Bhattacharya, 2024). This distinctive character necessitates a more nuanced conceptualization that bridges Islamic economics and social enterprise theory.

In addition, the institutional transformation of pesantren raises critical questions regarding governance, legitimacy, and operational sustainability (Akour & Alenezi, 2022). As pesantren engage more actively in economic activities, they must navigate complex challenges related to organizational capacity, financial management, and regulatory compliance (Ja'far, 2019). The integration of economic functions into traditionally education-centered institutions may also create tensions between maintaining religious authenticity and adopting modern managerial practices. These dynamics highlight the need for a systematic and theoretically grounded analysis of pesantren's transformation, one that goes beyond descriptive accounts to examine the structural and institutional dimensions of change (As-Salafiyah & Rusydiana, 2023).

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to critically examine the repositioning of pesantren within the framework of Islamic economics, focusing on their transformation into socio-economic enterprises. Unlike previous studies that treat pesantren primarily as educational institutions with supplementary economic activities, this research conceptualizes pesantren as emerging institutional actors whose economic roles are integral to their identity and function (Dhofier, 1982). By situating this transformation within the regulatory context of Indonesian Law Number 18 of 2019 on Pesantren, the study highlights the interplay between legal recognition and institutional change, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how pesantren evolve in response to both internal and external pressures (Indonesia, 2019).

This article advances three central arguments. First, it argues that the transformation of pesantren reflects a process of institutional repositioning in which economic functions are no longer peripheral or supplementary, but have become integral to the institutional identity and societal role of pesantren. In this transformation, pesantren evolve from solely religious-educational institutions into multi-functional actors that actively participate in community empowerment and socio-economic development.

Second, this study demonstrates that pesantren represent a distinctive model of socio-economic enterprise that integrates religious authority, ethical values, and community-based economic practices within a single institutional framework. Unlike conventional economic institutions that primarily operate through market-oriented mechanisms, pesantren-based enterprises are deeply embedded in social relations, moral legitimacy, and collective welfare orientations. This hybrid institutional character expands the conceptual scope of Islamic economics beyond formal Islamic financial institutions by emphasizing localized, socially embedded, and value-driven economic practices.

Third, the article contends that the formal recognition provided by Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Pesantren functions as a critical catalyst for institutional transformation. The law not only legitimizes the economic activities of pesantren but also strengthens their institutional capacity to operate as strategic agents of socio-economic development. In this regard, legal recognition serves as an enabling framework that accelerates organizational diversification, economic innovation, and institutional sustainability within pesantren.

To substantiate these arguments, this study adopts an institutional analytical approach that critically examines the structural, functional, and operational dimensions of pesantren transformation. The analysis explores how pesantren institutionalize economic activities, integrate them into their organizational structures, and negotiate the relationship between religious authority and economic practice. Furthermore, the study investigates how pesantren-based economic initiatives contribute to broader socio-economic outcomes, including community empowerment, local economic resilience, and institutional sustainability. By doing so, the article seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical discourse and institutional practice, offering both conceptual refinement and contextual relevance within the study of Islamic economics.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the growing literature on Islamic Economics by foregrounding pesantren as emerging socio-economic enterprises and hybrid institutional actors. The study challenges the conventional separation between religious and economic institutions by demonstrating that pesantren are capable of integrating educational, spiritual, and economic functions in a coherent and sustainable manner. More broadly, the article offers an alternative perspective for understanding the evolving role of Islamic institutions in contemporary society, particularly within developing economies where community-based and ethically grounded approaches to economic development are increasingly significant.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative library research design with a text-based analytical approach to critically examine the institutional transformation of pesantren into socio-economic enterprises within the framework of Islamic Economics. The study focuses on understanding how pesantren reposition their institutional roles by integrating economic functions into their religious and educational structures, particularly in the context of community empowerment and socio-economic development. (Aşkun & Erkoyuncu, 2023). The research is grounded in an interpretive approach that emphasizes the analysis of authoritative texts, scholarly discourse, and regulatory frameworks to uncover patterns of institutional change and conceptual development. Such an approach is particularly suitable for addressing questions that require theoretical clarification, normative interpretation, and synthesis of dispersed academic insights (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The corpus of data for this study consists of a carefully curated body of academic and policy-oriented materials. These include peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in international databases (e.g., Scopus and Web of Science), scholarly books on Islamic education and Islamic economics, as well as key foundational works that have shaped the understanding of pesantren and socio-economic institutions (Greene et al., 2023). In addition, regulatory documents play a central role in this study, particularly Indonesian Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Pesantren, which provides the formal basis for recognizing pesantren as institutions with educational, *da'wah*, and economic functions (Nadzir, 2015). The inclusion of this legal framework allows the analysis to move beyond purely conceptual discussions and engage with institutional realities shaped by state policy.

The process of data selection follows a purposive and criterion-based strategy to ensure both relevance and scholarly rigor. Sources were selected based on three main criteria: (1) direct relevance to the themes of pesantren, Islamic economics, and socio-economic enterprise; (2) academic credibility, indicated by publication in reputable journals or by established academic publishers; and (3) temporal relevance, prioritizing works published within the last decade while incorporating seminal earlier studies that remain influential in the field. To ensure comprehensive coverage, literature was identified through systematic searches using academic databases such as Scopus and Google Scholar, employing keywords including “pesantren,” “Islamic economics,” “social enterprise,” and “institutional transformation.”

The analytical procedure is guided by qualitative content analysis combined with a conceptual synthesis approach. Initially, the collected texts were subjected to a process of close reading to identify recurring themes, key arguments, and conceptual patterns related to the evolving role of pesantren. This was followed by a process of thematic categorization, in which data were organized into analytical domains such as institutional identity, economic practices, regulatory influence, and socio-economic functions. Through this process, the study moves from descriptive mapping toward analytical abstraction, enabling the identification of underlying structures and relationships (Pogodina, 2019).

To deepen the analysis, the study employs an institutional perspective that focuses on how organizational roles, norms, and functions evolve over time. This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding pesantren as dynamic entities that operate at the intersection of religious authority and economic activity. By integrating insights from institutional theory with the normative and operational dimensions of Islamic economics, the study develops a framework for interpreting pesantren’s transformation as a process of repositioning rather than mere functional expansion (Sudi et al., 2024). This allows for a more nuanced understanding of how pesantren negotiate their traditional roles while adapting to contemporary socio-economic demands.

The credibility and robustness of the analysis are ensured through several strategies. First, source triangulation is applied by engaging with diverse types of materials, including academic literature, policy documents, and conceptual works, to validate emerging interpretations. Second, critical appraisal of sources is conducted to assess their methodological soundness, theoretical contribution, and relevance to the research focus. Third, analytical transparency is maintained by clearly outlining the procedures of data selection, categorization, and interpretation, thereby enhancing the replicability of the study.

Ethical integrity constitutes an integral component of the research process. All sources are cited accurately and consistently in accordance with academic standards, ensuring proper acknowledgment of intellectual contributions. The study adheres to established principles of responsible scholarship, including those outlined by Committee on Publication Ethics, particularly with regard to citation ethics, avoidance of misrepresentation, and transparency in analysis.

In sum, by employing a rigorous qualitative design centered on textual and conceptual analysis, this study provides a robust methodological foundation for examining the repositioning of pesantren within Islamic economics. The approach enables a comprehensive and critical engagement with existing knowledge, facilitating the development of a coherent analytical framework that captures the complexity of pesantren as emerging socio-economic enterprises.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Institutional Reconfiguration of Pesantren: From Educational Authority to Socio-Economic Actor

The findings of this study reveal that pesantren are undergoing a substantive process of institutional reconfiguration, characterized by a shift from their historically dominant role as centers of religious authority toward becoming socio-economic actors embedded within broader development processes (Hamzah et al., 2022). This transformation reflects not merely an expansion of functions but a deeper rearticulation of institutional identity, authority, and operational logic in response to changing socio-economic contexts (Muhardi et al., 2022).

Classically, pesantren have been conceptualized as religious-educational institutions whose primary function is the transmission of Islamic knowledge and the formation of moral character. Their institutional legitimacy has traditionally been rooted in the authority of the kiai, whose influence extends beyond pedagogical leadership into the social and cultural domains of the surrounding community (Muhardi et al., 2022). Within this framework, pesantren function as epistemic institutions, producing religious scholars and preserving Islamic intellectual traditions across generations. Economic activities, when present, have typically been peripheral, informal, and subordinated to the primary educational mission (Robani et al., 2022).

However, the findings indicate that this mono-functional institutional model is increasingly being reconfigured in response to contemporary socio-economic pressures. The growing emphasis on inclusive development, poverty reduction, and community-based economic empowerment has generated new expectations for religious institutions to contribute more directly to economic life (Hefner, 2016). In this context, pesantren are no longer viewed solely as custodians of religious knowledge but as potential agents of socio-economic transformation (As-Salafiyah & Rusydiana, 2023).

A critical factor in accelerating this transformation is the formal recognition provided by Indonesian Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Pesantren, which explicitly acknowledges the economic function of pesantren alongside their educational and da'wah roles (Sugandi et al., 2017). This regulatory framework serves as a form of institutional legitimation, expanding the normative boundaries of pesantren's activities and providing a legal basis for their engagement in economic initiatives. The law effectively redefines pesantren as multi-functional institutions, thereby facilitating their integration into national development strategies (Sugandi et al., 2017; Mahdi, 2013).

From an institutional perspective, this shift can be understood as a process of structural differentiation and functional expansion. Pesantren increasingly develop formal organizational units dedicated to economic activities, such as cooperatives, production enterprises, and sharia-based financial services (Rohima et al., 2024). These units are not merely auxiliary but are structurally embedded within the institutional framework of pesantren, indicating a transition toward organizational complexity. This transformation aligns with broader patterns of institutional change in which organizations adapt their structures and functions to meet evolving environmental demands (Mustakim et al., 2024).

In parallel, the findings highlight a significant transformation in the nature of authority within pesantren. While the kiai remains a central figure, the basis of authority is gradually expanding to include managerial and entrepreneurial competencies. This results in the emergence of hybrid leadership models that combine traditional religious legitimacy with modern organizational skills (Holis et al., 2025). Such hybridization is essential for enabling pesantren to

operate effectively within the economic sphere while maintaining their religious identity. It also reflects a broader trend in institutional evolution, where authority is increasingly linked to performance and functional effectiveness rather than solely to traditional sources of legitimacy (Woerner-Powell & Edmondson, 2019).

Furthermore, the reconfiguration of pesantren is closely linked to their embeddedness within local communities. Unlike formal economic institutions that operate primarily through market mechanisms, pesantren leverage their social capital—trust, networks, and moral authority—to initiate and sustain economic activities. This embeddedness allows pesantren to function as intermediaries between religious values and economic practices, facilitating forms of economic engagement that are both socially inclusive and ethically grounded (Hakim et al., 2025). As such, pesantren-based economic activities are often oriented toward collective welfare, community empowerment, and resource redistribution.

Importantly, the findings suggest that the transformation of pesantren is not characterized by the displacement of traditional roles but by their rearticulation within a broader institutional framework. Educational and da'wah functions remain central; however, they are increasingly integrated with economic activities that support institutional sustainability and community development. This integration reflects a form of institutional layering, where new functions are added without dismantling existing structures (Alhifni et al., 2025). As a result, pesantren evolve into hybrid institutions that simultaneously operate across multiple domains.

This hybridization, however, is not without challenges. The integration of economic functions into pesantren raises questions regarding governance, accountability, and organizational coherence. The need to balance religious values with economic efficiency may generate internal tensions, particularly in relation to decision-making processes, resource allocation, and institutional priorities. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that pesantren actively negotiate these tensions by framing economic activities as extensions of their broader social mission, thereby maintaining alignment between institutional values and operational practices (Budiman et al., 2025).

In addition, the variation in the degree of transformation across pesantren highlights the importance of internal and contextual factors. Leadership vision, organizational capacity, access to financial resources, and external partnerships all play a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of institutional change (Hassan et al., 2023). Some pesantren have successfully developed diversified economic systems with significant socio-economic impact, while others remain in the early stages of transformation. This heterogeneity underscores the dynamic and contingent nature of institutional reconfiguration.

From the perspective of Islamic economics, the repositioning of pesantren represents a significant expansion of the field's institutional scope. Traditionally, Islamic economics has focused on formal financial institutions and macroeconomic frameworks (Chapra, 2016). The emergence of pesantren as socio-economic actors introduces a new dimension that emphasizes community-based, ethically grounded, and institutionally embedded economic practices. This development challenges the conventional dichotomy between religious and economic institutions, demonstrating that the two can be integrated within a single organizational framework.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that pesantren are undergoing a profound process of institutional reconfiguration characterized by the integration of economic functions into their core structure. This transformation redefines pesantren as socio-economic actors capable of contributing to community development, economic resilience, and social welfare. By moving beyond their traditional role as educational authorities, pesantren are repositioning themselves

within the broader landscape of Islamic economics as dynamic and multi-functional institutions. This institutional shift not only enhances their relevance in addressing contemporary socio-economic challenges but also provides a foundation for rethinking the role of Islamic institutions in modern economic systems.

Emergence of Pesantren-Based Socio-Economic Enterprises in Islamic Economic Practices

The findings of this study indicate that the institutional reconfiguration of pesantren is concretely manifested in the emergence of pesantren-based socio-economic enterprises. These enterprises represent not only an expansion of organizational functions but also the operationalization of Islamic economic principles within a community-embedded institutional setting (Iskandar et al., 2025). Unlike conventional business entities, pesantren-based enterprises exhibit a distinctive configuration that integrates economic activity with religious norms, social objectives, and institutional sustainability.

At the structural level, pesantren have increasingly developed diverse forms of economic units that function as institutionalized mechanisms for generating income and supporting community welfare (Sihabudin et al., 2025). These include cooperatives (*koperasi pesantren*), retail businesses, agricultural ventures, small-scale manufacturing, and sharia-based financial services (Saputra et al., 2023). The proliferation of these units reflects a shift from informal and sporadic economic engagement toward more organized and systematized economic practices. Importantly, these enterprises are not external appendages but are embedded within the organizational framework of pesantren, often managed by internal actors such as administrators, teachers, and trained students.

From the perspective of Islamic economics, these developments demonstrate the practical implementation of sharia-compliant economic principles in localized contexts (Mustofa et al., 2023). Transactions within pesantren-based enterprises are generally structured to avoid prohibited elements such as *riba* (usury), *gharar* (uncertainty), and *maysir* (speculation), while emphasizing fairness, transparency, and mutual benefit. This aligns with the broader normative framework of Islamic economics, which seeks to integrate ethical considerations into economic behavior (Chapra, 2016). In this regard, pesantren function as micro-institutional laboratories where Islamic economic principles are not merely theorized but actively practiced.

A defining characteristic of pesantren-based socio-economic enterprises is their dual orientation toward economic viability and social impact. Drawing on the conceptual framework of social enterprise (Bhanurasmī & Fisnawati, 2024; Fauzi et al., 2025), these enterprises can be understood as hybrid organizations that pursue financial sustainability while simultaneously addressing social needs. However, pesantren-based enterprises differ from conventional social enterprises in that their social mission is deeply rooted in religious values and communal obligations. Economic activities are often framed as part of a broader commitment to community service, rather than purely market-driven initiatives (Hansmann, 1979).

The embeddedness of these enterprises within the social fabric of pesantren further enhances their capacity to generate inclusive economic outcomes. Pesantren possess strong social capital, characterized by trust, networks, and moral authority, which enables them to mobilize resources and coordinate collective action (Suyono et al., 2026). This social embeddedness allows pesantren-based enterprises to function as platforms for community empowerment, providing access to employment, training, and financial services for both students and surrounding

communities (Helfiana & Maadi, 2025). In many cases, these enterprises serve as entry points for marginalized groups to participate in economic activities, thereby contributing to local economic resilience.

In addition, the findings reveal that pesantren-based enterprises play a strategic role in enhancing institutional sustainability. By generating internal revenue streams, pesantren reduce their dependence on external funding sources such as donations or government support. This financial autonomy strengthens their organizational resilience and enables them to invest in educational and social programs. At the same time, the integration of economic activities into pesantren structures creates opportunities for experiential learning, where students acquire practical skills in entrepreneurship, financial management, and business operations. This integration of education and economic practice reflects a holistic approach to human resource development (Achmadin et al., 2024; Nadzir, 2015).

Nevertheless, the development of pesantren-based socio-economic enterprises is not without challenges. One of the primary constraints identified in the literature is the limited managerial capacity within pesantren. Many pesantren lack formal training in business management, financial planning, and market analysis, which can hinder the effectiveness and scalability of their economic initiatives (Hafidh et al., 2026). In addition, access to capital remains a significant barrier, particularly for smaller pesantren that operate in resource-constrained environments. These limitations underscore the need for capacity-building programs and institutional support to strengthen the economic functions of pesantren.

Another challenge relates to governance and organizational integration. The incorporation of economic activities into pesantren structures requires clear governance mechanisms to ensure accountability, transparency, and alignment with institutional values (Agustina & Aini, 2025). Without proper governance, there is a risk that economic activities may become disconnected from the core mission of pesantren or create internal conflicts over resource allocation and decision-making (Pogodina, 2019). Therefore, the sustainability of pesantren-based enterprises depends not only on economic performance but also on the development of effective governance frameworks.

Despite these challenges, the overall trend indicates a growing consolidation of pesantren as socio-economic enterprises within the landscape of Islamic economics (Chapra, 2016). This consolidation is supported by the regulatory framework established by Indonesian Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Pesantren, which provides formal recognition and legitimacy for pesantren's economic activities (Hamzah et al., 2022). The law serves as an enabling environment that encourages innovation and institutional diversification, thereby facilitating the expansion of pesantren-based enterprises.

To synthesize the key characteristics of pesantren-based socio-economic enterprises identified in this study, the following table presents a comparative overview:

Table 1 Characteristics of Pesantren-Based Socio-Economic Enterprises

Dimension	Characteristics	Analytical Implication
Institutional Basis	Embedded within pesantren structure	Indicates integration of economic function into core institution
Types of Enterprises	Cooperatives, agriculture, retail, microfinance	Reflects diversification of economic activities
Economic Principles	Sharia-compliant (no riba, gharar, maysir)	Aligns with normative framework of Islamic economics
Orientation	Dual: economic sustainability + social welfare	Demonstrates hybrid nature of socio-economic enterprise

Actors Involved	Kiai, administrators, teachers, students	Shows internal organizational participation
Social Function	Community empowerment and inclusion	Strengthens local economic resilience
Educational Role	Experiential learning for students	Integrates education with economic practice
Challenges	Limited capacity, capital, governance issues	Highlights need for institutional strengthening
Regulatory Support	Formal recognition under law	Provides legitimacy and institutional encouragement

Source: Asesment data, 2026

The table above illustrates that pesantren-based enterprises are characterized by a unique combination of institutional embeddedness, ethical orientation, and socio-economic objectives. These features distinguish them from both conventional business entities and standard social enterprises, positioning them as a distinct category within Islamic economic practice.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that the emergence of pesantren-based socio-economic enterprises constitutes a central mechanism through which institutional transformation is realized. These enterprises embody a hybrid model that integrates religious values, economic activities, and social objectives within a single institutional framework. As such, they represent an important development in the evolution of Islamic economics, highlighting the potential of community-based institutions to contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic systems.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide a compelling basis for reinterpreting the role of pesantren within the broader framework of Islamic economics. Rather than functioning solely as religious-educational institutions, pesantren are increasingly emerging as hybrid entities that integrate educational authority with socio-economic functions (El-Gamal, 2006). This transformation invites a critical re-examination of dominant assumptions in both Islamic education studies and Islamic economics, particularly regarding the institutional boundaries between religion and economic practice (Hassan et al., 2023).

From an institutional perspective, the transformation of pesantren can be understood as a process of adaptive reconfiguration driven by both internal agency and external structural pressures. The integration of economic functions into pesantren aligns with the broader theoretical framework of institutional change, which emphasizes how organizations evolve in response to shifting environmental demands (Cook & Cook, 2024). In this case, pesantren respond to contemporary challenges such as economic inequality, community vulnerability, and the need for sustainable development by expanding their functional scope (Albani, 2021). This supports the argument that institutional survival increasingly depends on the ability to diversify roles and remain relevant within changing socio-economic contexts.

Moreover, the findings reinforce the concept of institutional hybridity, where organizations combine multiple logics—religious, educational, and economic—within a single structure (Muhardi et al., 2022). Pesantren exemplify this hybridity by maintaining their core identity as religious institutions while simultaneously engaging in economic activities that generate social and financial value. This hybrid nature challenges the conventional dichotomy that separates religious institutions from economic actors, demonstrating instead that these domains can coexist and

reinforce one another (Hamzah et al., 2022). In this sense, pesantren represent a form of organizational innovation that expands the conceptual boundaries of Islamic institutions.

Within the discourse of Islamic economics, the emergence of pesantren as socio-economic enterprises contributes to a significant broadening of the field's institutional scope. Traditionally, Islamic economics has been largely concerned with formal financial institutions, such as Islamic banks and capital markets (Greene et al., 2023). While these institutions play a crucial role in shaping macroeconomic structures, they often operate at a distance from grassroots communities. The findings of this study suggest that pesantren offer an alternative model of economic engagement that is deeply embedded within local contexts, thereby complementing the formal sector with community-based economic initiatives (Darmini, 2021).

This shift has important theoretical implications. First, it suggests that Islamic economics should not be limited to formal financial systems but should also encompass community-based institutions that operationalize economic principles in everyday practice. Pesantren-based enterprises demonstrate how Islamic economic values—such as fairness, transparency, and mutual benefit—can be implemented in localized settings through socially embedded organizational structures (Acemoglu et al., 2008). This aligns with the broader critique that Islamic economics must move beyond formalism and engage more directly with socio-economic realities (Haneef & Furqani, 2011).

Second, the findings highlight the importance of social capital in shaping economic practices within Islamic institutions. The success of pesantren-based enterprises is closely linked to their ability to leverage trust, networks, and moral authority within their communities. This supports the argument that economic behavior is not purely determined by market forces but is embedded within social relations (Sahrodi & Karim, 2024). In the case of pesantren, social capital serves as a key resource that facilitates collective action, reduces transaction costs, and enhances economic resilience. This perspective enriches Islamic economic theory by incorporating insights from economic sociology, thereby offering a more holistic understanding of how economic systems function in practice (Al Bayati, 2025).

Furthermore, the role of Indonesian Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Pesantren emerges as a critical factor in shaping institutional transformation. The law provides formal recognition and legitimacy for the economic functions of pesantren, thereby enabling them to operate more confidently within the economic sphere. From a theoretical standpoint, this reflects the role of regulatory frameworks in facilitating institutional change by redefining norms, expectations, and permissible activities (Anarki et al., 2025). The legal acknowledgment of pesantren as socio-economic actors not only validates existing practices but also encourages further innovation and expansion.

However, the integration of economic functions into pesantren also raises important challenges that warrant critical reflection (El-Gamal, 2006). The hybrid nature of pesantren creates potential tensions between different institutional logics, particularly between religious values and economic efficiency. For instance, the pursuit of financial sustainability may conflict with normative commitments to simplicity or non-commercialization (Sugandi et al., 2017). Similarly, the adoption of modern management practices may challenge traditional modes of leadership and decision-making. These tensions highlight the complexity of institutional hybridity and underscore the need for effective governance mechanisms to ensure coherence and alignment.

In addition, the findings point to significant disparities in the capacity of pesantren to develop and sustain economic enterprises. While some pesantren have successfully established

diversified economic systems, others face constraints related to limited resources, lack of managerial expertise, and restricted access to capital (Saputra et al., 2023). This variation suggests that institutional transformation is not a uniform process but is shaped by contextual factors such as leadership, organizational culture, and external support. From a policy perspective, this underscores the importance of targeted interventions to strengthen the economic capacity of pesantren, particularly through training, financial support, and institutional partnerships.

The discussion also highlights the broader implications of pesantren's transformation for community development. As socio-economic enterprises, pesantren have the potential to function as catalysts for local economic growth, particularly in rural and underserved areas (Jamil, 2025). Their ability to integrate education, economic activity, and social engagement positions them as strategic actors in promoting inclusive development. This aligns with global discussions on the role of social enterprises in addressing socio-economic challenges, while also offering a distinctively Islamic institutional model (Elmahgop et al., 2025).

Importantly, the findings of this study contribute to the ongoing debate on the future direction of Islamic economics. By foregrounding the role of pesantren, the study challenges the dominance of formal financial institutions in the field and highlights the significance of community-based approaches. This suggests the need for a more pluralistic understanding of Islamic economics, one that recognizes the diversity of institutional forms and practices. In this regard, pesantren can be seen as exemplifying an alternative paradigm of economic organization that is rooted in ethical values, social responsibility, and institutional embeddedness.

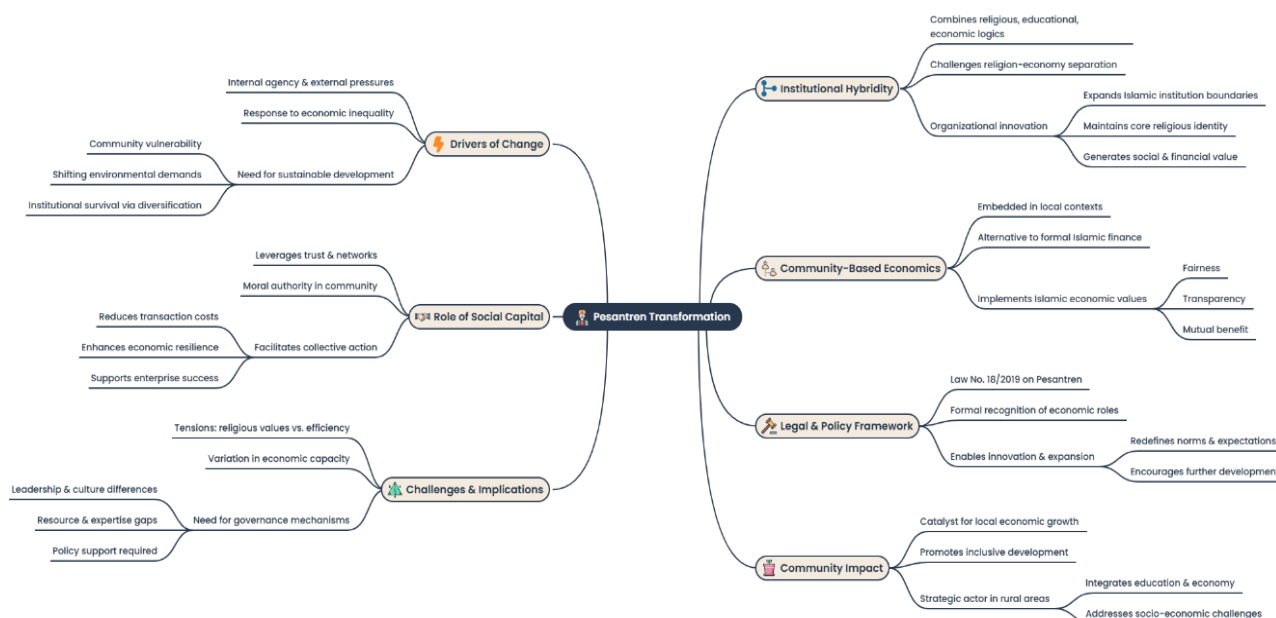


Figure 1 Pesantren Transformation & Hybridity

Figure 1 illustrates the institutional transformation of pesantren within the framework of Islamic Economics, highlighting how pesantren evolve from traditional religious-educational institutions into hybrid socio-economic enterprises. The diagram demonstrates that this transformation is driven by several interconnected factors, including increasing socio-economic challenges, community empowerment demands, institutional sustainability concerns, and the formal recognition provided by Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Pesantren. These dynamics encourage pesantren to integrate economic functions into their institutional structures through

cooperatives, entrepreneurial activities, and sharia-compliant financial practices. The figure further shows that pesantren transformation is supported by social capital, particularly trust, religious legitimacy, and strong community networks, which enable pesantren to develop community-based economic initiatives. At the same time, the transformation produces institutional hybridity, where religious authority, educational functions, and economic practices coexist within a single organizational framework. The diagram also highlights various implications and challenges, including governance complexity, managerial capacity, and the need to balance religious values with economic sustainability (Arslanturk et al., 2011). Ultimately, the figure emphasizes that pesantren-based socio-economic enterprises contribute to broader community development by promoting inclusive economic participation, ethical economic practices, and local economic resilience.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the repositioning of pesantren as socio-economic enterprises represents a significant development in both institutional studies and Islamic economics. The transformation of pesantren reflects a process of institutional reconfiguration, hybridity, and adaptation that expands their role within society. At the same time, it offers valuable insights into how Islamic economic principles can be operationalized in community-based settings. By bridging the domains of religion, education, and economy, pesantren emerge as dynamic institutions that contribute to both theoretical advancement and practical innovation. This underscores their potential to serve as models for sustainable and inclusive economic development within the broader landscape of Islamic economics.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the repositioning of pesantren within the framework of Islamic economics, highlighting their transformation from traditional religious-educational institutions into socio-economic enterprises. The findings demonstrate that this transformation is not merely an expansion of institutional functions but a deeper process of reconfiguration in which economic roles become integral to the identity and operation of pesantren. Through this shift, pesantren emerge as hybrid institutions that integrate religious authority, educational functions, and economic activities within a single organizational framework.

The analysis further shows that the emergence of pesantren-based socio-economic enterprises reflects the practical implementation of Islamic economic principles at the community level. These enterprises are characterized by their ethical orientation, social embeddedness, and dual commitment to economic sustainability and social welfare. In this regard, pesantren contribute to expanding the institutional scope of Islamic economics beyond formal financial systems, offering an alternative model rooted in community-based and value-driven practices.

In addition, the study highlights the critical role of Indonesian Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Pesantren in facilitating this transformation. The legal recognition of pesantren's economic function provides both legitimacy and structural support, enabling them to engage more actively in socio-economic activities. However, the findings also underscore the challenges associated with this transformation, including limitations in managerial capacity, governance complexities, and disparities in institutional readiness.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by bridging Islamic economics with institutional analysis, demonstrating how religious institutions can function as socio-economic actors within contemporary development contexts. Practically, it suggests that strengthening the

economic capacity of pesantren requires targeted support in areas such as management, financing, and institutional governance.

Future research is encouraged to explore empirical dimensions of pesantren-based enterprises, including their economic performance, governance models, and long-term sustainability. Such studies would further enrich the understanding of pesantren as dynamic institutions that play a strategic role in advancing inclusive and ethically grounded economic systems.

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