

## One Pesantren One Product and Economic Resilience During Covid-19 Pandemic: Formulating the Prototype of Independent Pesantrenpreneurs

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### ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted the economic and educational sectors of Islamic boarding schools. This was particularly due to their perceived lower economic resilience. Therefore, this study aimed to develop a prototype to encourage the establishment of independent pesantrenpreneurs in Indonesia. A descriptive qualitative approach was used to examine the implementation of the One Pesantren One Product (OPOP) program in both mentor and fostered pesantrens. The paradigm of the study followed an interpretive-constructivist framework. The results showed that the success of the Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School in West Java and the Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School in East Java in managing the pesantrens business could be attributed to several key factors, namely (1) Islamic boarding schools offered superior quality products that aligned with market segmentation, (2) Pesantrens had official and professionally managed business entities, and ensured accountability, (3) A strong network of strategic partners supported the business continuity of pesantrens, (4) The schools adopted creative and innovative approaches to business management, product development, and marketing, (5) Consistent adherence to sharia principles ensured the halalness of products and the incorporation of Islamic values into business processes.

**Abstrak:** Pandemi Covid-19 yang melanda dunia telah memberikan dampak signifikan pada semua sektor, termasuk sektor ekonomi. Dampak ekonomi tersebut juga berimbas pada bidang pendidikan, termasuk pondok pesantren, yang dinilai belum memiliki resiliensi ekonomi yang terlalu tangguh.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk merumuskan prototipe untuk mendorong terwujudnya pesantrenpreneur yang mandiri di Indonesia. Pendekatan pendekatan yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif yang bertujuan untuk mengkaji pelaksanaan program OPOP di pesantren mentor dan pesantren binaan. Paradigma yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini bersifat interpretive-constructivist. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittifaq Jawa Barat dan Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri di Jawa Timur dalam menjalankan bisnis pesantren tidak lepas dari beberapa faktor: 1.) Pesantren memiliki produk unggulan yang berkualitas sesuai dengan segmentasi pasar. 2.) Pesantren memiliki badan usaha resmi yang dikelola secara profesional untuk menjamin akuntabilitas badan usaha. 3.) Pesantren memiliki jaringan yang kuat dengan mitra-mitra strategis untuk mendukung keberlangsungan bisnis. 4.) Pesantren memiliki langkah-langkah kreatif dan inovatif baik pada aspek manajemen usaha, produk, maupun pemasaran. 5.) Pesantren menjalankan prinsip-prinsip syariah secara konsisten untuk menjamin kehalalan produk dan penerapan nilai-nilai keislaman dalam proses bisnis.

**Kata kunci:** OPOP, pesantrenpreneur, resiliensi ekonomi

## INTRODUCTION

The global Covid-19 pandemic which began in late 2019 had a profound and lasting impact on all sectors worldwide, with the educational sector in pesantrens being particularly affected by economic uncertainty.<sup>1</sup> The government responded and implemented the National Economic Recovery Program regulated in Law Number 2 of 2020. This was carried out by allocating Rp 695 trillion as a stimulus to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. Approximately Rp 2.6 trillion of this stimulus was distributed to about 26,000 pesantrens. This highlighted the ongoing need for affirmative assistance to achieve economic independence for most pesantrens.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years, there was a growing discourse on the importance of building independent pesantrens across various fields.<sup>3,4,5</sup> One of the defining characteristics of pesantrens was independence<sup>6</sup>, which allowed for autonomous management, not co-opted by any external parties.<sup>7</sup> However,

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<sup>1</sup>Risanda Alirastra Budiantoro, Sih Darmi Astuti, Herry Subagyo, Mubashir Ahmad, Economic Recovery Program Post Covid-19 at Modern Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren) in Semarang City. *International Journal of Islamic Business and Economics*. No.1 Vol. 6 (June 2022)

<sup>2</sup>Fatmawati and Ade Sofyan Mulazid, Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Ministry of Religious Affairs Policy in Entrepreneurial Development of Pondok Pesantren, *Madania: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman*, No 2, Vol. 25 (December 2021)

<sup>3</sup>Saiful Jazil, Muhammad Fahmi, Senata Adi Prasetya, Moh. Faizin, dan Muh Sholihuddin, 'Pesantren and the Economic Development in the Perspective of Maqashid Al-Shari'ah', *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)*. No. 1 Vol. 9 (July 2021)

<sup>4</sup>Laifa Annisa Hendarmin, Ida Rosyidah, and Mochamad Iqbal Nurmansyah, "Pesantren during The Pandemic: Resilience and Vulnerability, *Studia Islamika*. No. 3 Vol. 28 (2021)

<sup>5</sup>Gatot Suhirman and Muhammad Muhajir Aminy, The Economic Independence of Pesantren and Its Impact on the Development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), *International Journal of Health Sciences*. No.5 Vol. 6 (July 2022)

<sup>6</sup>Abdurrahman Wahid, 'Pesantren sebagai Subkultur dalam Dawam Rahardjo (ed.), *Pesantren dan Pembaharuan*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1988)

<sup>7</sup>Moh Kosim, Pesantren on the Frame of Government Policies, *KARSA: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture*. No.2 Vol. 23 (December 2015)

amidst the rapid globalization and capitalization of education, pesantrens, as the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia<sup>8</sup>, were required to undergo institutional transformation. This was achieved by focusing on four aspects, namely resilience, formation of thinker cadres, the birthplace of young scholars, and quality orientation.<sup>9</sup>

To enhance the economic resilience of pesantrens, the pesantrenpreneur program emerged as a viable strategy.<sup>10</sup> The term "pesantrenpreneur" was derived from "pesantren" and "entrepreneur." Pesantren refers to an Islamic educational institution comprising five elements, namely the boarding school, mosque, teaching of classical Islamic texts, students, and kiai.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, an entrepreneur engaged in independent activities, characterized by perceptive identification of new product opportunities, creativity, and innovative business development.<sup>12,13</sup> Pesantrenpreneur can be defined as an Islamic educational institution capable of entrepreneurship with new and innovative products.<sup>14</sup>

To accelerate the economic resilience of pesantrenpreneurs, the West Java Provincial Government launched the One Pesantren One Product (OPOP) program, followed by the East Java Provincial Government a year later. This involved collaboration between boarding schools, local government, academics, entrepreneurs, media, and the wider community. However, during its two-year operation, the program encountered several challenges.<sup>15,16,17</sup>

Four main problems have been identified in the implementation of

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<sup>8</sup>Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi Menuju Millenium*, (Ciputat: Kalimah, 2001).

<sup>9</sup>Noor Mahpudin, *Potret Dunia Pesantren*, (Bandung: Humaniora, 2006)

<sup>10</sup> Heri Cahyo Bagus Setiawan, Nur Hidayat, Beni Dwi Komara, Sukaris, and Aries Kurniawan, Dynamic Capability Pesantren Entrepreneur, *Journal of Islamic Economics Perspectives*, No. 2 Vol. 3 (September 2021)

<sup>11</sup>Zamakhshari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren Studi tentang Pandangan Hidup Kiai*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1982)

<sup>12</sup>Mufidatul Himmah, Abdullah, Maknunatun Navisah, 'Student Creativity Program as a Media to Build the Entrepreneurship Souls of Students in Pondok Pesantren, *Managere: Indonesian Journal of Educational Management*, No. 1 Vol. 4 (June, 2022)

<sup>13</sup>Anton Bawono, 'Creative Economic Development of Pesantren, *Shirkah: Journal of Economics and Business*, No. 1 Vol. 3 (September 2018)

<sup>14</sup>Mohammad Ghofirin, *Pesantrenpreneurship Berbasis Koperasi. Modul*. (Surabaya: Dinas Koperasi dan UKM Provinsi Jawa Timur & OPOP Training Center Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya, 2019)

<sup>15</sup>Budi Harsanto, Asep Mulyana, Yudi Ahmad Faisal, and Venny Mellandhia Shandy, Open Innovation for Sustainability in the Social Enterprises: An Empirical Evidence, *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, No. 3 Vol. 8 (September 2022)

<sup>16</sup>Irham Zaki, M. Bastomi, Fahri Zusak, Denizar Abdurrahman Mi□raj, Fatin Fadhilah Hasib, Islamic Community-based Business Cooperation and Sustainable Development Goals: A Case of Pesantren Coomunity in Indonesia, *International Journal of Ethics and Systems*, No. 4 Vol. 38 (February 2022)

<sup>17</sup>Dandy Sobron Muhyiddin, Nurwajdah Ahmad, Andewi Suhartini, and Hisam Ahyani, 'Community Economic Empowerment Through the One Pesantren One Product Program at Pagelaran III Islamic Boarding School, Subang, Indonesia, *Journal of Islamic Economics Lariba*, No. 1 Vol. 8 (August 2022)

OPOP. Firstly, some pesantrens still held a conservative mindset and were hesitant to embrace the idea of economic independence. Secondly, only a few were prepared and committed to developing their products. There was also a lack of entrepreneurship capacity among the human resources pesantrens. Lastly, pesantren-produced products were often perceived as inferior by the market, leading to doubts about the sustainability. The program coverage remained relatively small, with only 5.94% (1,574 from West Java and 30 from East Java) participating out of the total 26,974 pesantrens in Indonesia.<sup>18</sup> During the virtual pesantrens product exhibition in West Java in early December 2020, only 500 participated out of the 1,574 initial participants. This indicated that the impact and sustainability of the program were around 32% (<https://opop.jabarprov.go.id/temu-bisnis-produk-pesantren-jabar-bukukan-transaksi-rp2102-miliar/>).

Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School in West Java and Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School in East Java stood out among the few pesantrens that have successfully implemented OPOP. Al-Ittifaq, managed by K.H. Fuad Affandi, was founded in 1934 and adopted the pesantrenpreneur concept through the Alifmart Islamic Boarding School Cooperative (Kopontren).<sup>19</sup> In its implementation, students were equipped with essential agribusiness entrepreneurship knowledge and skills, from planting and harvesting to packaging and marketing various products, such as carrots, cabbage, strawberries, and oranges.<sup>20</sup> The agricultural products were subsequently marketed in various supermarkets across Bandung, Jakarta, and Tangerang, with students accompanied by alumni mentors during the production process.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, Mukmin Mandiri demonstrated a high level of sustainability in developing the pesantrenpreneur concept through the OPOP program.<sup>22</sup> The Agribusiness and Agroindustry-based Pesantren Foundation is located in Graha Tirta Housing, Waru, Sidoarjo and was founded in April 2006 by K.H. Muhammad Zakki, with a strong entrepreneurial spirit and the application of

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<sup>18</sup> Yudi Utomo, *Interview on OPOP in West Java*, (9 July 2021)

<sup>19</sup> Ivan Yulivan, 'Economic Empowerment in the Framework of State Defense in Bandung District Islamic Boarding Schools, *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, Vol. 31 (2022)

<sup>20</sup> Grisna Anggadwita, Leo-Paul Dana, Veland Ramadani, and Reza Yanuar Ramadan, "Empowering Islamic Boarding Schools by Applying the Humane Entrepreneurship Approach: The Case of Indonesia", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, No. 6 Vol. 27 (August 2021)

<sup>21</sup> R. Lukman Fauroni, The Economic Community of Pesantren Al-Ittifaq: Opposing Market Capitalism and the Improvement of Competitiveness, *Shirkah: Journal of Economics and Business*, No. 3 Vol. 4 (December 2019)

<sup>22</sup> Misjaya, Didin Saefuddin Bukhori, Adian Husaini, and Ulil Amri Syafri, Konsep Pendidikan Kemandirian Ekonomi di Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri Sidoarjo - Jawa Timur, *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, No. 1 Vol. 8 (Februaury 2019)

"Jihad Entrepreneurship."<sup>23</sup> Its flagship product, coffee,<sup>24</sup> successfully penetrated both domestic and export markets.<sup>25</sup>

The growing interest in the pesantrenpreneur program since 2015 attracted academic attention,<sup>26</sup> which led to studies on entrepreneurship programs in pesantrens and the development of economic resilience.<sup>27</sup>

For instance, Hartawan focused on entrepreneurship programs and their implementation, along with the supporting and hindering factors at Anwarul Huda Islamic Boarding School in Malang.<sup>28</sup> The pesantren aimed to instill and train the spirit of economic independence among students while supporting its economy through efforts such as snack and beverage products, including refillable mineral water to meet local community needs.<sup>29</sup> However, limited business networks and a lack of human resources have been the dominant factors hindering the growth of pesantren businesses.

Another investigation by Ali explored entrepreneurial practices within Pondok Pesantren Daarul Ulum wal Hikam Yogyakarta. The results showed the pesantrens ventured into various business fields, including industry, trade and services, food, and creative industries, responding to increasing market demands. However, they faced challenges related to limited capital and business management systems. Considering the diverse business fields developed by the pesantrens, attention was required in addressing capital and managerial aspects.

A study by Afidah on the perspectives of students regarding entrepreneurship and the process of instilling entrepreneurial values showed that the entrepreneurship program at the pesantren broadened students understanding of the importance of engaging in business. Moreover, the guidance provided to students in the business field through the enculturing

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<sup>23</sup>Muhammad Imron, Zaini Tamin AR, Moh. Faizin, Fauza Masyhudi, Usman Yudi, 'Pesantren dan Kewirausahaan: Analisis Pendidikan Agrobisnis dan Agroindustri di Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri Sidoarjo, *Murabby: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, No. 1 Vol. 5 (July 2022)

<sup>24</sup>Mochammad Andre Agustianto and Sunarto AS, The Concept of Santripreneurs and Islamic Boarding School Independence: Comparative Study of PP Al-Azhar Banyuwangi and PP Mukmin Mandiri Sidoarjo, *El-Qist: Journal of Islamic Economics and Business (JIEB)* No. 2 Vol. 12 (February, 2023)

<sup>25</sup>Heri Cahyo Bagus Setiawan, "Kontribusi Praktik Kewirausahaan di Pondok Pesantren: Studi pada Pondok Pesantren Entrepreneur Mukmin Mandiri, Waru Sidoarjo" *Jurnal Riset Entrepreneurship*, No. 2 Vol. 2 (August 2019)

<sup>26</sup>Hartawan, *Strategi Pengembangan Jiwa Entrepreneurship Santri di Pondok Pesantren Anwarul Huda Malang*, (Skripsi, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, 2020)

<sup>27</sup>Siti Afidah. *Entrepreneurship Kaum Santri: Studi pada Pesantren Entrepreneur Tegalrejo Magelang*, (Tesis, UIN Walisongo Semarang, 2018)

<sup>28</sup>Zaini Hafidh, Badrudin, "Pesantren dan Kemandirian Perekonomian: Studi tentang Kewirausahaan di Pondok Pesantren Ar-Risalah Cijantung IV Ciamis, in *Manageria: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, No. 2, Vol. 3 (November 2018)

<sup>29</sup>Mahrus Ali, *Penerapan Pendidikan Entrepreneur di Pondok Pesantren Daarul Ulum Wal Hikam Malangan Giwangan Umbulharjo Yogyakarta dalam Upaya Membangun Kemandirian Santri*. (Skripsi, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2017)



entrepreneurship program showed positive results. This was evident in the emergence of several students and alumni who had established various types of independent businesses.

In contrast, Hartawan, Ali, and Afidah, Hafidh and Badrudin investigated pesantrens with well-established entrepreneurship programs, who were members of the OPOP with significant business turnovers. These studies examined the independent business processes run by Pondok Pesantren Ar-Risalah Cijantung IV Ciamis, and revealed its focus on livestock, fisheries, agriculture, and waste processing. These five business fields provided substantial economic benefits to pesantrens and the surrounding community.

The studies above also portrayed a range of approaches, with some pesantrens traditionally managing businesses with limited market segments, while others adopted more modern management practices, expanding their market reach. Nevertheless, these studies cannot be used as the basis for identifying common challenges faced by several pesantrens in implementing the OPOP program or determining effective strategies for developing entrepreneurship by relying on a flagship product that is professionally managed from production to marketing phases.

The current study aimed to provide a comprehensive picture of the factors that hindered the implementation of the OPOP program in East and West Java, along with identifying OPOP development strategies to enhance the economic resilience of pesantrens. It also aimed to produce a policy paper for the Ministry of Religious Affairs, promoting the establishment of self-sufficient pesantrenpreneurs in Indonesia.

## METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach<sup>30</sup> and focused on studying the implementation of the OPOP program in mentoring and fostering pesantrens to achieve economic resilience toward independent pesantrenpreneurs. The study paradigm employed was interpretive-constructivist.<sup>31</sup> This entailed interpreting data from various reliable sources based on specific theories to construct new concepts that could be applied in similar contexts.<sup>32</sup>

The study was conducted in two provinces with the highest number of pesantrens and santri in Indonesia, making them highly representative and credible. Specifically, 47.5% of all pesantrens in Indonesia were located in West and East Java [<https://ditpdpontren.kemenag.go.id/pdpp/statistik>]. These

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<sup>30</sup>Jason K. Ward, Unoma Comer, and Suki Stone, *On Qualifying Qualitative Research: Emerging Perspectives and the Deer (Descriptive, Exploratory, Evolutionary, Repeat) Paradigm, Interchange*, Vol. 49, (January 2018)

<sup>31</sup> Yanto Chandra and Liang Shang, *Qualitative Research: An Overview, Qualitative Research Using R: A Systematic Approach*, (April 2019)

<sup>32</sup>Jonathan Grix, *The Foundations of Research*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

included Al-Ittifaq and Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding Schools in Bandung, West Java and Sidoarjo, East Java, respectively.

The data were obtained through (1) interviews with pesantren stakeholders, (2) analysis of supporting documents such as strategic plans and program reports, and (3) observation of the OPOP implementation. The data were subsequently analyzed using the interactive analysis method, which involved three interrelated and interconnected stages, namely data reduction, data display, as well as verification and conclusion.<sup>33</sup>

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### OPOP Program at Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School in West Java

The involvement of Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School in the development of the OPOP program began in 2018. The program was managed by the Islamic Boarding School Cooperative (Kopontren), which not only catered for students daily needs, but also coordinated and supervised several farmer groups around the pesantren. This aimed to enhance the quality and quantity of the agricultural products as well as distribute to a wider range of consumers.

As the leading force in managing the OPOP program, Al-Ittifaq focused on flagship agribusiness products. Starting with only three farmer groups in Bandung Regency in 2018, by the beginning of 2021, they had successfully empowered nine farmer groups (three times the number since inception). With an average of 30 members for each group, this translated to empowering 270 farmers across three regencies of Bandung, West Bandung, and Cianjur.

The increased number of farmer (group) partners with Kopontren Al-Ittifaq during 2018-2021 was due to the higher demand for agricultural products, particularly during the pandemic from mid-2020. For instance, Gus Irawan, the CEO of Kopontren Al-Ittifaq, acknowledged the rising demand for vegetables in modern markets during the pandemic, which prompted them to collaborate with large-scale farmers through the OPOP program and distribute agricultural products<sup>34</sup>. Throughout 2020, the cooperative successfully increased the distribution of large-scale agricultural shipments by collaborating with over 91 Islamic boarding schools in West Java. All parties involved shared the same orientation and goal, which was to provide fresh agricultural products nationally and for export demands.

With the increasing demand for fresh vegetables, Al-Ittifaq was dedicated to maintaining supply and price stability by strategically distributing its agricultural products in traditional markets, modern markets, and restaurants in Bandung and Jakarta. This approach aimed to enhance the selling value of vegetables over time and positively impact the welfare of the farmers under the auspices of the Kopontren. This was also believed to contribute to

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<sup>33</sup>Norvell Northcutt, Danny McCoy, *Interactive Qualitative Analysis: A Systems Method for Qualitative Research*, (California: Sage Publication Inc, 2004).

<sup>34</sup>Setia Irawan, *Interview on OPOP in Al-Ittifaq*, (2 September 2021)

reducing inflation in certain regions and boost the contribution of the agricultural sector to the Regional Gross Domestic Product (PDRB).

To optimize the selling value of agricultural products, Al-Ittifaq adopted a market segmentation strategy, which involved the distribution of products according to the needs of each region. This was essential because, unlike factory-processed standardized items, agricultural products could vary significantly due to factors like pest attacks and weather conditions, which affected quality and maturity.

Kopontren Al-Ittifaq classified its agribusiness products into three grades, namely A, B, and C, allowing them to strategically distribute the products, further benefiting the farmers under patronage.

The cooperative had its standards for selecting harvested products. For instance, grade A products, which met the maturity and freshness levels for fruit and vegetables were specifically distributed to large companies and modern markets, such as PT Lion Super Indo, Yogya Department Store, and AEON, located in Bandung and Jakarta. On the other hand, grade B products were designated for distribution through medium to high businesses, such as restaurants and tourist sites with shopping centers, and grade C products were extensively distributed through traditional markets.

Since its first supply of high-quality vegetables to modern markets in 1993, Kopontren Al-Ittifaq had consistently innovated to sustain its success in the agribusiness sector. In response to global challenges and technological advancements, the cooperative had embraced online platforms and successfully developed the Alifmart online shopping application, which boasted over 100 active users, despite being operational for less than a year. The application could be accessed at <https://alifmart.online>, or downloaded from Google Play Store or the App Store. This digitization effort aimed to expand the market in the future.

In line with the commitment to progress and further solidify their position in the market, the Alifmart Store was established in January 2021, offering an array of fresh vegetables and fruits directly sourced from supported farmers. In addition, consumers could find processed food products, fashion items, and handicrafts produced by Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittifaq and the surrounding community. The store provided the convenience of pick-up and delivery facilities, collaborating with 20 expeditions for efficient delivery services. The payment options were extensive, with 24 methods available, including ATM transfers, Shopeepay, Gopay, Alfamidi, Alfamart, and Indomaret. This eased the buyers to shop for fresh vegetables and fruits anytime and anywhere.

In less than a year of operation, the store experienced significant growth, generating around 7.5 million in revenue within the first three months of 2021. This added to the list of extraordinary achievements of the cooperative through its Kopontren.



Kopontren Al-Ittifaq established collaborations with various parties to bolster its export-oriented business. These partnerships included Bank Indonesia in 2014, JICA Japan in 2016, and PUM Netherlands in 2017. These institutions provided support to the cooperative, along with the supported farmers and pesantren businesses in the agricultural sector, in terms of institutional development, business, or capacity-building standpoint. As a result of these efforts, Al-Ittifaq, successfully became one of the pesantrens that thrived in business through the OPOP program.

### **OPOP Programs at Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School in East Java**

Since the inauguration OPOP program by the Governor of East Java in 2019, Mukmin Mandiri had emerged as one of the 30 pioneering boarding schools, spearheaded by Dr. Muhammad Zakki, M.Si., the founder and guardian of the institution.

Mukmin Mandiri had gained attention due to its innovative concept of "santripreneurship," which had been implemented since 2012, coinciding with the establishment of Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School 2 in Tulungagung Regency. The flagship program, "Hulu Hilir Kopi Santripreneur" (Upstream-Downstream Santripreneur Coffee), engaged the pesantren students, "santri," in various aspects of processing, from planting coffee seeds to processing dried beans into roasted (powdered) coffee, packaging, and marketing the products.

The basic foundation for the involvement of students in business was to provide opportunities to learn not only about religion but also entrepreneurship and apply the knowledge gained in various fields. Practical mentoring was expected to motivate students from lower-middle-class backgrounds to become successful entrepreneurs after graduating.

Mukmin Mandiri offered a diverse range of coffee, including Kopi Mahkota Raja, Kopi Doa, Kopi Songo, Kopi Tjap Kiaiku, and Kopi Greng Lanang, which catered to various market demands. Meanwhile, the majority of these coffee types were marketed domestically, Kopi Mahkota Raja had successfully penetrated the international market in Australia.

Kiai Zakki did not hesitate to extensively market the santri-produced coffee by collaborating with well-known Indonesian artist, Ayu Azhari, who became a brand ambassador and actively assisted in marketing through exhibitions and social media. This yielded significant results, with the market demand soaring, and their monthly production capacity reaching an impressive 30 tons.

As a millennial entrepreneur, Kiai Zakki also collaborated with private television stations in East Java, such as JTV and SBO, to advertise the products during program breaks, despite the substantial costs involved. However, due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, television advertising activities were reduced to ensure business stability.

Interestingly, despite the extraordinary impact of the pandemic on small, medium, and large-scale businesses, the demand for Pondok Pesantren

Mukmin Mandiri coffee increased. This surge in demand could be attributed, in part, to the widespread coffee culture among the residents of Java Island, who were more familiar with the term "*ngopi*" (coffee drinking). The presence of numerous small-scale coffee shops and larger cafes also contributed positively to the growth of coffee entrepreneurs.

The surge in coffee enthusiasts and consumers had been a blessing for Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri, as observed by Kiai Zakki. As the pandemic situation gradually improved overtime in various regions, the economy stabilized slowly, leading to rapid growth in the pesantrens businesses under the OPOP program, particularly coffee business. Consequently, the coffee products successfully reached a broader international market, even penetrating countries such as Malaysia, China, and Dubai.

Efforts to digitize the products had already been initiated, starting with marketing the coffee on the e-commerce platform, Bukalapak. However, there was still a need to significantly develop these digitization efforts in the future.

Product digitization was an essential endeavor for all business players, including pesantrens that embraced the concept of pesantrenpreneur through the OPOP program. As the demand for coffee continued to rise, Kiai Zakki took a proactive step by establishing a coffee factory in Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri 2, located in Tulungagung Regency, spanning an extensive land area of 650 hectares. Commencing operations in January 2019, the factory boasted a remarkable daily production capacity of 15 tons of coffee, generating monthly revenues exceeding 1 billion. This thriving business also benefited the students studying entrepreneurship at the pesantren, as they received free education on religion while earning a monthly salary.

The remarkable achievements of Mukmin Mandiri in developing its coffee business and successfully exporting its products to various countries served as an exemplary reference for other pesantrens, particularly those in East Java, to initiate and advance the OPOP program.

### **Challenges of the One Pesantren One Product (OPOP) Programs at Al-Ittifaq and Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding Schools**

Since the implementation of the OPOP program at Al-Ittifaq in West Java in 2018, followed by Mukmin Mandiri in East Java a year later, both institutions had become exemplary models for other Islamic boarding schools. They had successfully realized student-processed products, assisted by surrounding communities, and had managed to compete in both national and international markets, achieving production levels of tens of tons per day with monthly revenues exceeding IDR 1 billion.

The success of these institutions could be attributed to the collaborative efforts of multiple parties. For instance, Al-Ittifaq in West Java had experienced the active involvement of farmers, alumni, and students as key players in the success of their agribusiness under the auspices of Kopontren Al-Ittifaq. In addition, the partnership of Al-Ittifaq with several other institutions, such as

Bank Indonesia, JICA Japan, and PUM Netherlands, had positively contributed to the development and the sustainability of the program.

Despite their accomplishment, Al-Ittifaq faced certain challenges during the process. The agribusiness, with its superior products of fresh vegetables and fruits, had often encountered challenges, such as pest attacks and extreme weather conditions, leading to crop failures.

With time and effective monitoring, these issues could be mitigated, primarily for the supported farmers under Kopontren Al-Ittifaq. Similarly, Mukmin Mandiri in East Java had achieved significant recognition for its world-renowned coffee business. Mahkota Raja Coffee, one of the top products of the OPOP program, had been exported to several countries, including Australia, Malaysia, China, and Dubai.

The success of Mukmin Mandiri was largely attributed to the hard work and dedication of the students, alumni, and other stakeholders. At the inception of the business journey, the pesantren faced challenges related to equipment availability, such as coffee peeling, grinding, and roasting machines.

These challenges were however resolved in 2019 when Kiai Zakki built a complete coffee factory in Mukmin Mandiri 2, Tulungagung Regency. The COVID-19 pandemic posed a unique challenge for both Al-Ittifaq and Mukmin Mandiri in realizing the OPOP, as it affected the world economy and Indonesia as well. Despite these difficulties, both pesantrens implemented various strategies to overcome the challenges and continued their successful entrepreneurship programs.

### **Strategies Applied by Al-Ittifaq and Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding Schools to optimize the OPOP program.**

At the outset of the OPOP program in 2018 in West Java, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged a year later, spreading throughout the country. This presented a particular challenge for pesantren in their efforts to realize the OPOP program, as experienced by Al-Ittifaq in West Java and the Mukmin Mandiri in East Java.

However, both Islamic boarding schools applied diverse strategies and made concerted efforts to optimize OPOP. One of the strategies implemented was changing the concept of product sales to be more market-oriented and digitalizing products. Kopontren Al-Ittifaq, for instance, made a breakthrough by establishing the Alifmart store, which not only served the daily needs of the santri, but also sold fresh vegetables and fruits harvested from the surrounding community.

Kopontren Al-Ittifaq also developed an online shopping application to reach a broader market, allowing all Indonesians to purchase agricultural products from Alifmart through mobile phones. This digital version of the Alifmart store could be accessed at <https://alifmart.online> or downloaded from Google Play Store or App Store. Moreover, the store offered diverse shipping

and payment methods to optimize the sales of agricultural products in the digital era.

On the other hand, Mukmin Mandiri collaborated with a well-known Indonesian artist, Ayu Azhari, who became the brand ambassador for the coffee products. Through direct marketing strategies at SMEs product exhibitions and OPOP programs, Ayu Azhari promoted the products and several times offered them to the 138 thousand followers on Instagram.

Kiai Zakki, the founder and caretaker of the pesantren, also marketed the student-processed coffee products on the e-commerce platform, Bukalapak. With these various efforts to optimize sales, the market interest in the product experienced significant growth. Therefore, the adaptive attitude that Mukmin Mandiri adopted in the digital era and during the pandemic helped in maintaining the economic resilience of the pesantren.

### **Prototype of Successful OPOP-based Pesantrenpreneur**

Through an in-depth study of the implementation, challenges, and strategies carried out by Al-Ittifaq and Mukmin Mandiri in realizing OPOP-based pesantrenpreneur concept, several ideal models could be formulated as prototypes for other Islamic boarding schools. These models might help in optimizing potential and products, making them competitive with high selling value. Some of the key ideas included the following:

- a. Pesantrens should offer high-quality products that aligned with market demands by employing market segmentation to maximize the quality of flagship products and ensure the optimal sale of all products. A prime illustration was Al-Ittifaq, which had adeptly executed this strategy. The Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School Cooperative (Kopontren) effectively distributed its fresh vegetable and fruit agricultural products across various market segments. Specifically, grade A products were distributed to institutions/companies and malls, grade B was marketed in supermarkets and modern markets, and grade C was sold in traditional markets. Mukmin Mandiri in East Java adopted similar strategies, exporting products of excellent quality to several countries outside of Indonesia, and distributing products of good quality to study groups, cafes, and coffee shops. Meanwhile, products with decent quality were marketed in small-scale coffee shops.
- b. Pesantrens should have official business entities managed professionally to ensure business accountability and sustainability. This necessitated that pesantrens possessed a legal framework to facilitate the provision or sale of services and products. This legal framework could take the form of a Limited Liability Company (PT), Commanditaire Vennootschap (CV), Trading Unit (UD), or Cooperatives. Most professional companies had a sufficiently good accountability system related to revenue production or cost control. For instance, Al-Ittifaq was legally established with a deed of establishment on June 6, 1997, Number: 219BHKWK.10VI1997. Similarly, Mukmin Mandiri

had an official legal entity for the coffee business operated under PT. Berkati Mukmin Mandiri through Notary Act Sugeng Prijadi, SH, MKn. Number: 24, dated August 31, 2015.

- c. Pesantrens should have strong networks with strategic partners to support business sustainability and collaborate with partners related to superior products in order to expand their businesses. For instance, those engaged in animal husbandry could build relationships with relevant government agencies as investors, companies and restaurants as meat suppliers, or even artists and influencers as brand ambassadors in the product marketing process. Al-Ittifaq undertook this process in West Java by collaborating with residents to be guided as foster farmers in the production process of fresh vegetables and fruits in the surrounding area. Similarly, Mukmin Mandiri made remarkable breakthroughs by partnering with a famous Indonesian artist as a brand ambassador to promote the coffee business.
- d. Pesantren should take creative and innovative steps in business management, products, and marketing in order for their superior products to compete in the broader market. The current relentless development trend had caused shifts in all aspects and fields, including the business world. Product digitalization was essential for entrepreneurs, including those involved in pesantren businesses. Therefore, they should be adaptive and responsive to distribute their products to a broader market at both national and international levels. For instance, Al-Ittifaq innovated by creating the Alifmart online shopping application, which could be accessed on the website <https://alifmart.online> or downloaded from Google Play Store or App Store. Mukmin Mandiri in East Java undertook the same step by marketing its coffee products on the Bukalapak e-commerce platform. This was carried out to ease the consumers from all regions in buying the processed products from both pesantrens through applications or e-commerce installed on their mobile phones.
- e. Pesantren, in running a business should consistently apply sharia principles to ensure product *halal*-ness and internalize Islamic values. In the process, they could also collaborate with the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) to ensure the halalness of the marketed products or apply the principle of honesty in selling processed products. For instance, both Al-Ittifaq and Mukmin Mandiri ensured that every product sold was certified halal by the Indonesian Ulama Council and instilled Islamic values in running their businesses. Kopontren Al-Ittifaq applied *Ta'awun* (helping each other) as a principle of cooperation and synergy with various parties and implemented Syura (cooperation) or deliberation regarding ideas and participation of all elements, by fostering farmers, with the aim of empowerment.
- f. Mukmin Mandiri, through the *Ngaji Sogeh* (praying for wealth or to be wealthy) forum, educated its congregation on the basic principles of entrepreneurship and the application of Islamic values in the process. This pesantren also gave Islamic-themed names to some of its products like Kopi Tjap Kiaiku and embedded tagline in the Mahkota Raja coffee product, such



as Robusta Arabica Blend Doa, Coffee + Milk + Sugar + Prayer (4 in 1).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, for approximately three years, the local governments of West Java and East Java had sought to enhance the economic resilience of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantrens*) during the Covid-19 pandemic through the implementation of the One Pesantren One Product (OPOP) program. While many *pesantrens* were still striving to achieve financial independence by optimizing the potential of their surrounding areas to produce standout products, some had successfully overcome this phase. Two such examples were the Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School in West Java, which produced fresh vegetables and fruits from its farming, and the Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School in East Java, producing flagship coffee products from its plantation.

Both *pesantrens* applied a "from upstream to downstream" approach, where all processes from planting, harvesting, packaging to selling were carried out independently. Specifically, Al-Ittifaq empowered its students, alumni, and surrounding residents to become farmers under the auspices of the Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School Cooperative (*Kopontren*). The resulting fresh produce was subsequently distributed to consumers based on market segmentation determined through the Alifmart Store, both offline and online. Similarly, Mukmin Mandiri conducted the process of planting coffee beans, harvesting, grinding, packaging, and marketing independently. The processed product was subsequently sold based on predetermined market segmentation, both domestically and internationally.

The development process of these businesses had not been without obstacles or challenges. For instance, Al-Ittifaq often faced pest attacks on its agricultural produce and weather factors, resulting in crop failures. Mukmin Mandiri faced similar challenges, as both *pesantrens* operated in the agribusiness field. Technical difficulties related to providing coffee grinding equipment had also been experienced, resulting in students frequently leaving and entering the *pesantren* to grind their harvested coffee.

In response to these challenges, both *pesantrens* had made improvements in various fields. This included learning more effective planting and harvesting cycles, finding ways to deal with pest attacks, and providing training to those involved, specifically students and alumni in both boarding schools and sponsored farmers under the *Kopontren* Al-Ittifaq program. In addition, a coffee factory with complete equipment was built simultaneously with the establishment of Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri 2 in Tulungagung Regency to fulfill the equipment needs in coffee processing.

Both institutions collaborated with strategic partners to optimize product sales through the OPOP program. For instance, *Kopontren* Al-Ittifaq partnered with Bank Indonesia, JICA Japan, and PUM Netherlands, receiving guidance and mentoring to scale up their ongoing business. while Mukmin Mandiri

collaborated with government agencies and coffee export communities to sell its products domestically and abroad. These boarding schools had also incorporated digitization, as Al-Ittifaq marketed its respective superior products through the Alifmart online shopping application, while Mukmin Mandir sold products through the Bukalapak e-commerce platform.

The success stories of Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittifaq in West Java and Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri in East Java were highly inspiring for other OPOP program-sponsored boarding schools to continuously strive on realizing their potential and developing high-competitive flagship products. In practice, the most effective ways to replicate and adapt these success stories to other boarding schools included, 1) Maximizing the potential in the boarding school area to produce high-quality flagship products with appropriate market segmentation. 2) Having a legally registered and professionally managed business entity. 3) Collaborating with appropriate and relevant strategic partners in the business area or type of business pursued. 4) Providing various creations and innovations, including managerial, product, and marketing. 5) Upholding Islamic values and adhering to Sharia principles to ensure the halalness of products in conducting business.

## AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

M. Faisol: Contribute to formulating research ideas, collecting data, processing data, and interpreting data.

Muhammad Edy Thoyib: Contributing to writing systematics, research methods.

Miftahul Huda: Contributing to analyzing interpretation results, the language proofread

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## Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declared there were no conflict of interest related to this study.

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