

Pesantren Based Entrepreneurship: Laundry Business and Socio-Economic Impact at Imam Syafi'i Islamic Boarding School Brebes

Anaty

STIES Putera Bangsa Tegal, Indonesia

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***Corresponding author:**

bawazieranaty@gmail.com

Author's email:

bawazieranaty@gmail.com

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Abstract

This research examines the management practices and socio-economic contributions of the laundry business unit at Pondok Pesantren Imam Syafi'i Brebes, Central Java, Indonesia. Serving as one of the pesantren's entrepreneurial ventures, the laundry unit not only meets students' daily needs but also enhances the institution's financial resilience. Adopting a descriptive qualitative method, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with pesantren leaders, laundry operators, and students, complemented by participant observation and institutional records. The study highlights that the laundry service alleviates students' domestic responsibilities, enabling them to concentrate on essential activities such as learning and Qur'an memorization. In addition, the unit generates revenue that supports pesantren operations, assists disadvantaged students, and extends services to the local community, thereby fostering stronger socio-economic ties. Guided by Islamic business ethics honesty, trust, and transparency the laundry demonstrates that, despite challenges in facilities and staffing, it holds promise as a pesantren based entrepreneurial model integrating economic empowerment with spiritual and social values.

Introduction

Islamic boarding schools, commonly known as pondok pesantren, are among the most influential Islamic educational institutions, playing a vital role in nurturing generations with strong character, knowledge, and self-reliance. Since their inception, pesantren have been recognized as key centers of religious learning, primarily dedicated to the study and advancement of Islamic sciences (Ziemek, 1986). Pesantren have not only functioned as institutions of spiritual education but have also transformed into productive centers of economic activity. This transformation demonstrates the ability of pesantren to respond to the needs of modern society while maintaining Islamic values as their foundation (Dhofier, 2011).

The functional transformation of pesantren can be seen from the growing establishment of business units that support institutional independence. These business units are not merely additional sources of income but also serve as entrepreneurial education platforms for students (*santri*). Through such initiatives, pesantren are able to produce graduates who not only master religious knowledge but also possess practical skills to compete in the workforce and even create their own businesses (Saputra et al., 2021).

One of the increasingly developed business units in pesantren is the laundry business. Initially, this business was established to meet the internal needs of pesantren, considering the large number of students living in dormitories with busy daily routines that required quick and practical services. The laundry service proved to be very helpful for students in maintaining cleanliness and neatness in their clothing. Over time, this laundry business expanded to serve the surrounding community, thus providing dual benefits for both pesantren and the wider social environment (Arwani & Masrur, 2025).

The laundry unit in pesantren not only functions as a provider of cleaning services but also serves as a means of economic empowerment and entrepreneurial learning. Students involved in managing the laundry business gain hands-on experience in business management, customer service, and the application of sharia principles in day-to-day business practices. Therefore, the laundry unit functions as a laboratory of sharia-based entrepreneurship, preparing students to face real-world challenges with independence and integrity.

Several studies reinforce the importance of integrating Islamic education with economic activities in pesantren. Saputra et al. (2022) highlight that the pesantren-based entrepreneurship economy fosters independence through productive business units. Similarly, Arwani & Masrur (2025) emphasize that pesantren laundry businesses not only increase operational funds but also serve as managerial training opportunities for students. In other words, pesantren business units provide multidimensional benefits.

A quantitative study at Pesantren Darussalam Rajapolah (2024) revealed that pesantren laundry businesses positively impact the welfare of the surrounding community, one of which was analyzed through the CIBEST model. This finding underscores that the benefits of pesantren business units are not limited to internal stakeholders but extend externally as well. From a sharia management perspective, Yahya et al. (2023) stress the importance of clear division of work, authority, and responsibility so that these business units can operate professionally while adhering to Islamic principles.

In addition, Mediamu (2025) reports that the development of laundry businesses in pesantren contributes strategically to improving educational facilities, providing financial support for underprivileged students, and fostering entrepreneurial character rooted in Islamic values. This demonstrates that pesantren laundry businesses are not merely economic activities but also serve as platforms for character education, social empowerment, and strengthening spiritual values. Thus, pesantren laundry initiatives represent a tangible form of integration between education, economy, and Islamic values.

Based on the above discussion, this study focuses on the *Analysis of Sharia Management in Laundry Business Units at Pondok Pesantren Imam Syafi'i Brebes*. This focus is essential since pesantren laundry businesses are not only regarded as economic enterprises but also encompass educational, social, and spiritual dimensions. The study is expected to produce an applicable and sustainable model of sharia-based entrepreneurship learning. Such findings will not only benefit Pondok Pesantren Imam Syafi'i Brebes but can also serve as an inspiration for other pesantren in developing sharia-based business units that are effective, productive, and provide real contributions to the wider community.

Literature Review

Pesantren as Educational and Economic Institutions

Pesantren have long been recognized as Islamic educational institutions focusing on deepening religious knowledge, nurturing moral values, and fostering student independence (Ziemek, 1986; Dhofier, 2011). However, socio-economic developments have encouraged pesantren to transform their roles. No longer limited to being centers of spiritual education, pesantren have begun to play a role as centers of economic empowerment. This transformation is realized through the development of various independently managed productive business units to support institutional sustainability (Saputra et al., 2021).

This shift in roles aligns with the concept of entrepreneurial pesantren, which integrates Islamic education with economic activities aimed at building financial independence and entrepreneurial skills among students (Wahid, 2019). Through this model, pesantren are not only educational institutions but also agents of socio-economic change within society. Thus, pesantren serve a dual function as spiritual institutions and economic incubation centers based on Islamic values.

Pesantren Business Units and Student Empowerment

One of the most commonly developed business units is the laundry service, which was initially intended to meet the internal needs of pesantren. Over time, this business expanded into a public service for surrounding communities, contributing to both pesantren economics and the socio-economic well-being of the environment (Arwani & Masrur, 2025). Such business models serve as tangible means for pesantren to cultivate independence while fostering an entrepreneurial culture among students.

Pesantren business units not only generate additional income but also act as platforms for experiential learning. Students gain firsthand experience in business management, service strategies, and ethical entrepreneurship in accordance with sharia principles. This reinforces the role of pesantren as training centers for producing a Muslim generation with both spiritual strength and economic competence (Saputra et al., 2022).

Sharia-Based Management in Pesantren Business Units

Sharia-based management is a crucial aspect of successfully running pesantren business units. Islamic management principles emphasize justice, transparency, trustworthiness, and proportional division of labor (Yahya et al., 2023). Implementing these principles ensures that pesantren business units operate professionally, efficiently, and in alignment with

Islamic values. Hence, sharia management is not only a normative rule but also a practical tool to safeguard the sustainability of pesantren enterprises.

In practice, sharia-based management in laundry businesses includes transparent financial management, fair labor relations, and a business orientation that pursues not only profit but also collective well-being. Such an approach aligns with pesantren's mission to nurture students with integrity, leadership ability, and adherence to Islamic values as guiding principles in business activities.

Socio-Economic Impact of Pesantren Enterprises

Various studies highlight that pesantren business units generate dual impacts, both internally and externally. A study at Pesantren Darussalam Rajapolah (2024) found that laundry enterprises positively contributed to the welfare of the surrounding community, partly through the CIBEST model analysis, which measures material and spiritual dimensions of well-being. This demonstrates that pesantren can act as local economic drivers through the management of simple yet strategic businesses.

Beyond economic benefits, pesantren laundry businesses also produce significant social impacts. A Mediamu (2025) report notes that profits from pesantren business units are largely allocated to improving educational facilities, providing aid for underprivileged students, and funding social programs based on Islamic values. Thus, pesantren enterprises are not merely economic activities but also instruments of social and spiritual empowerment that reinforce pesantren's position as multifunctional institutions within society.

Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, which is commonly used to obtain in-depth insights into social phenomena within a natural context. The qualitative descriptive design is considered appropriate because the research focuses on exploring how pesantren manages its business unit and the socio-economic impacts that arise. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative research seeks to interpret meanings from human experiences, making it suitable for analyzing the pesantren's laundry unit as both an educational and economic institution.

The data sources of this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with pesantren leaders, managers of the laundry unit, and several students directly involved in daily operations. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from institutional documents such as financial records, pesantren profiles, and activity reports. As emphasized by Moleong (2017), combining multiple sources of data enhances the validity and comprehensiveness of qualitative research. In addition, participant observation was conducted to capture the real practices of laundry management and student involvement.

For the data analysis process, this study applied the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To strengthen data validity, triangulation of sources and methods was carried out by comparing interview results, observations, and supporting documents.

This analytical approach ensures that the findings are not only descriptive but also credible, reliable, and academically accountable, as recommended by Sugiyono (2021) in qualitative research methodology.

Table 2. Research respondents

No.	Respondent	Position/Role	Data Collection Technique
1	Ust. Fachrudin	Head of Pesantren & Supervisor	In-depth Interview
2	Fadel Arfan	Laundry Unit Manager	In-depth Interview
3	Student Representative A	Santri (Laundry Staff)	In-depth Interview
4	Student Representative B	Santri (Laundry Staff)	In-depth Interview
5	Student Representative C	Santri (Laundry Service User)	In-depth Interview
6	Researcher Notes	Observational Data	Participant Observation

Source: Processed by the author (2025)

The selection of respondents was conducted purposively to ensure that the data collected represents individuals who are directly involved in and knowledgeable about the laundry unit's operations. The Head of Pesantren and the Laundry Unit Manager were chosen because they oversee managerial and strategic decisions. Student representatives were selected as they have different roles two as laundry staff and one as a service user allowing the study to capture both managerial and operational perspectives as well as the users' experience. This diversity of respondents strengthens the depth and relevance of the findings for analyzing sharia-based management practices.

In addition to qualitative data, this study plans to include supporting quantitative indicators, such as the laundry unit's monthly revenue, average number of customers (internal and external), and percentage contribution of the laundry unit to the pesantren's operational budget. These numerical indicators will complement the qualitative findings by providing measurable evidence of the laundry unit's economic impact on the pesantren and its surrounding community.

Results and Discussion

Profile of Pondok Pesantren Imam Syafi'i Brebes

Pondok Pesantren Imam Syafi'i Brebes is an Islamic educational institution located in Brebes Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. The pesantren was established with the primary goal of nurturing Muslim generations with noble character, deep religious knowledge, and the ability to practice Islamic teachings in daily life. Since its founding, the pesantren has emphasized Qur'an- and Sunnah-based education, with the main activities of the students focused on studying classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning), memorizing the Qur'an, studying fiqh, and moral development (Interview with Ust. Muhammad Fachrudin, 2025).

Pondok Pesantren Imam Syafi'i has not only concentrated on spiritual education but has also sought to equip students with practical skills to live independently after completing

their studies. The pesantren applies an integrated education system that combines intensive Islamic education with formal education in accordance with the national curriculum. Thus, graduates are expected to excel not only in religious knowledge but also in academic competence and life skills.

The pesantren's vision is "To shape Qur'anic generations who are knowledgeable, virtuous, and independent based on Islamic values." To achieve this vision, the pesantren has formulated several missions, including: (1) providing Qur'an- and Sunnah-based Islamic education, (2) fostering discipline, honesty, and trustworthiness among students, (3) developing students' academic and non-academic potential, and (4) managing sharia-based productive business units to support the pesantren's independence.

One of the strategic steps in building independence is the development of pesantren business units. Various initiatives have been launched, ranging from cooperatives and canteens to laundry services. Among these, the pesantren laundry unit has become one of the most developed. Initially, the laundry only served the internal needs of the students living in the dormitories. However, as the number of students grew and the demand for practical services increased, the laundry evolved into a productive business unit that not only serves students but also teachers (asatidz) and the surrounding community.

The management of the laundry unit is carried out by prioritizing sharia management principles, such as trustworthiness (amanah), transparency, fairness, and orientation toward collective benefit. Beyond its practical role in providing cleanliness services, the pesantren laundry also serves as a medium for Islamic entrepreneurship education. By participating in the management process, students learn about business management, customer service, and accountability in business operations based on Islamic values.

In addition to generating economic benefits, the laundry's profits are allocated to support the pesantren's operations, improve educational facilities, and provide assistance to underprivileged students. Therefore, the laundry unit functions not only as a business enterprise but also as an instrument of character education, economic empowerment, and social strengthening (Interview with Ust. Muhammad Fachrudin, 2025).

Fulfilling Students' Needs

The interview with Fadel Arfan, a 12th-grade student, revealed that the laundry service at Pondok Pesantren Imam Syafi'i Brebes greatly supports students' daily activities. With this service, students are no longer burdened by washing their own clothes, allowing them to focus more on core activities such as studying and memorizing the Qur'an. The laundry service also provides comfort, as the clothes returned are clean, fragrant, and neatly arranged.

In addition, the laundry is valued for its quick and consistent turnaround time, so students are not inconvenienced when waiting for their clothes. When issues arise, such as mixed-up garments, the laundry staff respond quickly and responsibly to resolve them. This demonstrates effective management and good customer service, even though the business unit operates within a pesantren environment.

The centralized policy requiring all students to use the laundry service also has a positive impact. The pesantren environment becomes more orderly and hygienic, as students' clothing cleanliness is better maintained. This aligns with the findings of Fauzi & Hidayat (2021), who stated that pesantren-based laundry services can enhance student discipline, create a more comfortable environment, and support the effectiveness of the learning process.

Economic Empowerment of the Pesantren and the Community

The laundry service at Pesantren Imam Syafi'i Brebes is not solely oriented toward internal needs but is also open to the surrounding community. This decision allows the laundry to serve a dual function: as a source of revenue for the pesantren and as a service provider for the public. Thus, the pesantren's laundry becomes part of the local economic ecosystem, benefiting both the pesantren and the community.

This economic contribution extends beyond income generation. The profits from the laundry are allocated to support the pesantren's operations, such as improving educational facilities and providing subsidies for underprivileged students. In this way, the laundry serves as a strategic instrument that ensures the sustainability of the pesantren's education and da'wah, while also contributing directly to community welfare.

Such empowerment models align with the study of Nurhayati, Akbar, & Fitriani (2022), which emphasized that pesantren enterprises engaging the local community can create economic synergy. By opening access to public services, pesantren act as agents of economic empowerment, ensuring that their presence benefits not only their internal stakeholders but also strengthens socio-economic relations with their surroundings.

Sharia Management in Laundry Operations

From a management perspective, the laundry business is run according to sharia principles that prioritize trust (amanah), honesty, and responsibility. An interview with Ustadz Muhammad Fachrudin, B.A., indicated that laundry financial records are organized and transparent. This fosters trust both within the pesantren and among community members who use the laundry service.

The application of sharia principles is also evident in service and operational practices. The laundry unit is not solely profit-oriented but emphasizes broader benefit (maslahah). This is reflected in the staff's friendly attitude toward students and the allocation of profits, much of which supports the pesantren's educational and da'wah programs. Thus, sharia management becomes a practical tool that ensures business sustainability while reinforcing spiritual values.

This is consistent with Rahma & Setiawan (2020), who argued that sharia-based management strengthens Islamic business ethics in pesantren. Business management rooted in sharia not only teaches technical aspects but also instills moral values that shape students' character. In this way, the laundry functions as a laboratory of Islamic entrepreneurship, balancing professionalism and spirituality.

Social and Spiritual Impacts

Spiritually, the laundry serves as a practical learning medium for students to understand and apply sharia principles in business. Values such as honesty, trustworthiness, and beneficial service become part of their daily practice. Students not only receive the service but also learn how economic activities can be managed in line with Islamic principles.

Socially, the laundry fosters positive interactions with the surrounding community. By opening its services to the public, the pesantren demonstrates its role as an inclusive institution responsive to community needs. This strengthens social relations between the pesantren and its environment, while also expanding the benefits of the laundry unit.

The Mediamu report (2025) further emphasized that pesantren enterprises, including laundry services, make strategic contributions to social welfare. Profits from these businesses not only improve pesantren facilities but are also allocated to assist underprivileged students and support other social programs. Thus, pesantren laundry is not merely an economic unit but also a tool of spiritual and social empowerment, reinforcing the pesantren's role as a multifunctional institution.

Challenges and Development Recommendations

Although the laundry service has operated effectively, several challenges remain to ensure its sustainability. One of the main obstacles is limited facilities, particularly during the rainy season. During this period, the volume of laundry increases while drying becomes more difficult, affecting the speed of service delivery.

Human resources are another area of concern. Laundry staff require regular training to enhance technical skills and strengthen service delivery based on Islamic values. Through training, the laundry service is expected to become more professional while consistently reflecting sharia principles in every aspect of its operations. If these challenges are addressed, the pesantren's laundry has the potential to serve as an inspirational model for other pesantren across Indonesia. This enterprise can become an example of how a simple business unit can serve as an instrument of education, empowerment, and sustainable da'wah. Thus, the laundry functions not only as a practical service but also as a platform for shaping students' character, independence, and integrity.

Table 2. Summary of Findings on the Sharia Laundry Business at Pondok Pesantren

Aspect	Findings	Source
Fulfillment of Students' Needs	Laundry service helps students focus on studying and Qur'an memorization, with quick, clean, and neat results. Centralized policy ensures orderliness and cleanliness in the pesantren environment.	Interview with Fadel Arfan (2025)
Economic Empowerment	Laundry functions as both a source of pesantren income and a service for the local community. Profits support facility improvement and subsidize underprivileged students.	Interview with Ust. Fachrudin (2025) & Documents

Sharia Management	Managed with <i>amanah</i> , honesty, and transparency. Financial records are systematic and open. Service emphasizes <i>maslahah</i> , with profits reinvested into education and da'wah programs.	Interview with Ust. Fachrudin (2025)
Social and Spiritual Impact	Students learn sharia-based business ethics (honesty, trustworthiness, benefit orientation). Laundry fosters positive community relations and supports social welfare programs.	Interview with Fadel Arfan & Ust. Fachrudin (2025)
Challenges & Recommendations	Limited facilities during rainy season, need for staff training on technical and sharia-based service. Recommended improvements: facility upgrades and regular training to ensure sustainability.	Field Observation (2025)

Source: Processed by the author based on researcher findings (2025)

Conclusion

The findings indicate that the laundry service at Imam Syafi'i Islamic Boarding School in Brebes makes a significant contribution to meeting the needs of the students. Through a centralized policy requiring students to use the laundry service, learning and Qur'an memorization activities become more focused, as the technical burden of washing clothes is no longer the students' personal responsibility. In addition, the consistent quality of service, ranging from cleanliness to timeliness, creates a more orderly, clean, and conducive environment for education.

The laundry business unit also plays an important role in empowering both the pesantren economy and the surrounding community. Revenue generated from this unit not only supports the operational needs of the pesantren but is also allocated to improving educational facilities and providing assistance for underprivileged students. By offering services to the general public, the pesantren laundry has successfully become part of the local economic ecosystem, generating a dual impact both internally and externally.

The management of the pesantren laundry applies sharia-based principles of trustworthiness, transparency, and orientation toward public benefit. Well-organized financial records and the allocation of profits for education and da'wah demonstrate that this unit is not merely a business, but also a living laboratory for students to practice Islamic economic values. Thus, the laundry functions not only as an economic tool but also as an instrument for character building and Islamic entrepreneurship education.

Although the unit has been operating well, there are challenges that need to be addressed, such as limited facilities during the rainy season and the need for capacity building of human resources through regular training. If these improvements are made, the pesantren laundry has the potential to become an inspirational model for other Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Therefore, the laundry business at Imam Syafi'i Islamic Boarding School in Brebes not only supports the continuity of education but also strengthens

the role of pesantren as multifunctional institutions in the spiritual, social, and economic fields.

This study has limitations as it focuses on a single business unit within one pesantren, making the findings less generalizable to other Islamic boarding schools with different characteristics. Moreover, the research is more descriptive in nature and does not employ quantitative measurement of the economic impact in detail. Future research is recommended to examine other business units across different pesantren using a comparative approach, as well as incorporating quantitative analysis to strengthen empirical evidence regarding the contribution of pesantren-based entrepreneurship to economic empowerment and education.

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