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A Study of Traditional Pesantren in Aceh**

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INTEGRATING ENTREPRENEURIAL VALUES INTO FAITH-BASED EDUCATION: A STUDY OF TRADITIONAL PESANTREN IN ACEH

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Abstract

This study explores the integration of entrepreneurial values within the educational practices of traditional pesantren in Aceh, Indonesia. While entrepreneurship is not formally taught, pesantren foster entrepreneurial competencies through religious devotion, moral education, and communal life. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The findings reveal that pesantren cultivate dual dimensions of edupreneurship: batiniyah values such as sincerity, perseverance, and reliance on God, and lahiriyah practices, including community leadership, social responsibility, and trust-building. These values emerge organically from daily religious practices and form a moral foundation for entrepreneurial engagement. Despite challenges such as the absence of formal entrepreneurial curricula and limited critical thinking development, pesantren demonstrates a sustainable model of faith-based entrepreneurship that balances religious commitment with economic agency. This study contributes to global discussions on Islamic education and value-based entrepreneurship, offering a context-specific paradigm for integrating ethical economic empowerment into religious education systems. The Acehese pesantren experience provides a valuable alternative to secular models, emphasizing indigenous educational traditions' potential to drive spiritual and socioeconomic transformation.

Keywords: *Edupreneurship; Entrepreneurial Values; Islamic Education; Entrepreneurship; Pesantren.*

A. Introduction

Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) in Indonesia are currently navigating the growing demands of globalization, especially in relation to rapid economic and technological transformation. While some *pesantren* have begun integrating general education into their systems, many traditional institutions, particularly in Aceh, remain rooted in classical religious instruction. As one of the poorest provinces in Sumatra, Aceh offers a distinct socio-cultural context where *pesantren* hold profound influence but have not yet fully embraced structured efforts to cultivate entrepreneurial skills among students. This situation highlights a critical disconnect between the *pesantren's* potential as community-based educational hubs and their current capacity to prepare students for contemporary socioeconomic realities.

Pesantren is among the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, endowed with spiritual legitimacy and deeply rooted community support. Their influence extends well beyond religious instruction, often encompassing economic, cultural, and social domains (Fathoni & Rohim, 2019). Given their historical and moral authority, *pesantren* possesses the foundational resources to empower students through entrepreneurial capacity development. These institutions can serve as platforms for creating job opportunities, promoting social entrepreneurship, and developing business initiatives across sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, services, and Islamic finance (Fathoni & Rohim, 2019).

However, most *pesantrens* in Aceh continue to rely on traditional religious learning models that emphasize ritual practices, teacher obedience, and strict adherence to established religious texts. While valuable in preserving Islamic identity, this pedagogical orientation often overlooks the need to equip students with practical skills to navigate modern challenges. Existing studies, including those by Marhamah (2018) and Nurainiah (2021), have noted the socio-political support for *pesantren* but have not provided specific frameworks for integrating entrepreneurial learning into religious education. As such, the absence of a structured and contextualized edupreneurship model constitutes a clear research gap (UU 18 Tahun 2019; Kemenag, 2023).

To respond to this challenge, this study proposes edupreneurship as a conceptual and practical integration of entrepreneurship with Islamic moral, spiritual, and social values. This educational model is not intended to secularize *pesantren* education but rather to enrich it by aligning with broader national policies, including the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN), the Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019, and Ministry of Religious Affairs initiatives to promote entrepreneurship (Kemenag, 2023). Nonetheless, the implementation of edupreneurship remains limited, informal, and fragmented in many *pesantrens* across Aceh.

In response, the Ministry of Religion launched the Formal Diniyah Education Program (PDF) under Regulation No. 13 of 2014 to promote curriculum reform that includes entrepreneurship. However, only a few *pesantrens* in Aceh have adopted this model (Zulkhairi, 2018). The majority remain focused on religious studies centered on classical Islamic texts, such as the “yellow books”, which, while fostering discipline and spiritual devotion, often lack elements of critical thinking, technological literacy, and economic empowerment (Nurainiah, 2021; Zulkhairi, 2018; Suardi, 2024). Though valuable for inculcating obedience (*takzeem*), this curriculum model fails to sufficiently prepare students for the demands of modern life and work (Arfan et al., 2023).

This educational imbalance poses a significant challenge: *pesantren* graduates may possess strong religious knowledge and character but lack the practical competencies to achieve economic independence and contribute actively to their communities. This reinforces the urgency of integrating entrepreneurial content into *pesantren* curricula. Primary sources, including policy documents and expert studies, affirm the potential and the current limitations of *pesantren* education in Aceh (Usman & Hadi, 2021). A curriculum that fuses Islamic teachings with structured entrepreneurial learning may serve as a viable solution to this educational and socioeconomic gap.

Incorporating edupreneurship into *pesantren* learning frameworks is also supported by contemporary research on Islamic education and modern



pedagogical theory (As'ad, 2022; Sari et al., 2021). Studies emphasize that fostering an entrepreneurial spirit within religious education can enhance student engagement and help cultivate well-rounded individuals who are socially responsible, economically active, and spiritually grounded.

Institutional actors such as the Aceh Dayah Education Office could be pivotal in guiding this transformation. Key strategies include curriculum revision, promoting economic literacy, adopting relevant digital technologies, and fostering a leadership culture that embraces innovation (Djazilam, 2019; Sanjaya et al., 2020). Despite these recommendations, no previous research has explicitly proposed a comprehensive edupreneurship framework tailored to the unique cultural, spiritual, and economic context of *pesantren* in Aceh (Sarja, 2019; Halil, 2021).

This study addresses that need by proposing an integrated model that reflects *pesantren's* values, traditions, and institutional structures. The framework promotes entrepreneurial thinking through life skills training, value-based education, curriculum enrichment, and extracurricular activities. Drawing on Islamic teachings, including the entrepreneurial legacy of Prophet Muhammad SAW, the model emphasizes financial independence, ethical business conduct, and spiritual integrity (Gusriani et al., 2012; Ishom, 2018). Supporting this, a hadith that states "poverty is close to kufr" highlights the importance of seeking sustenance through lawful means (Sanjaya et al., 2020).

The implementation of edupreneurship should also lead to good business practices and personal discipline, as highlighted by Rizka et al., (2021) and Sari et al., (2021). By nurturing entrepreneurial capacity from within the *pesantren* culture, this study aims to advance a model of Islamic education that addresses economic realities without compromising religious commitments. This aligns with national education objectives and contributes to local and national economic resilience by preparing *pesantren* graduates to be devout leaders and dynamic entrepreneurs.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach to uncover implicit and explicit edupreneurship values within traditional *pesantren* in Aceh. The qualitative design was chosen to explore deeply embedded cultural and educational practices that cannot be captured through quantitative measures (Moleong, 2000). The research was conducted across *pesantren* in three major regions of Aceh Province: the Southwest Region (Aceh Jaya, South Aceh, and Subulussalam), the Central Region (Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar, and Pidie), and the Northern Region (Bireuen, Lhokseumawe, and North Aceh).

The selection of *pesantren* was made purposively using a stratified regional approach to ensure representative diversity in size, program characteristics, and levels of integration between religious and general education. A total of ten *pesantrens* were selected based on geographic distribution, student population, curriculum variation, and their openness to educational innovation. This selection allowed for meaningful cross-case comparisons and a holistic understanding of how edupreneurship values manifest in different institutional contexts.

The study involved 80 participants, including *pesantrens* students and teachers. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their roles, duration of involvement in *pesantren* education, age, and willingness to contribute to the study. Students aged between 12 and 18 years and teachers with diverse educational and professional backgrounds were included to capture various experiences and insights.

Data was collected over three months using a triangulated approach involving semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis (Sugiyono, 2019; Walidin et al., 2015). The interviews lasted one to two hours and were designed to elicit detailed narratives about participants' experiences and perspectives on the educational values promoted within their *pesantrens*. To ensure credibility, interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Triangulation methods included



member checking and peer debriefing to enhance data validity and reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Participant observation was conducted during daily activities, including teaching and learning sessions, religious rituals, and extracurricular events. This allowed the authors to understand the social and pedagogical dynamics that shape the internalization of edupreneurship values. Additionally, relevant institutional documents such as curricula, educational guidelines, and program records were reviewed to gain contextual insights and corroborate interview findings.

For data analysis, the writers applied an inductive-interactive approach guided by comparative analysis. This process involved organizing and coding data into thematic categories, identifying patterns, and developing generalizations grounded in field data (Walidin et al., 2015). Analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research period to avoid data overload and to refine focus as new insights emerged (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The analysis also drew on the principle of theoretical saturation, ensuring that emerging patterns were consistently validated across multiple data sources.

To maintain transparency and traceability, pseudonyms were used for all participants, and ethical approval was obtained before the research began. Instruments used in the field included smartphones, interview protocols, notebooks, and audio recorders. All procedures adhered to the principles of ethical research and the protection of participant confidentiality.

This methodological framework allowed the writers to capture the complex interplay of religious teachings, cultural practices, and entrepreneurial values within *pesantrens* education. It also enabled the development of a grounded model of edupreneurship that reflects the lived realities of teachers and students in Aceh's traditional Islamic boarding schools.

C. Results and Discussion

The results of this study are presented in accordance with the research objectives and questions, which aimed to identify and analyze the implicit and explicit edupreneurship values embedded within traditional

pesantren in Aceh. Based on the qualitative design and triangulated data collection methods—including in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis—the findings reveal a nuanced portrait of how *pesantren* education integrates spiritual teachings with entrepreneurial potential. These results are not only grounded in field experiences but also aligned with the broader educational and policy frameworks discussed earlier. The following discussion interprets these findings through the lens of the theoretical and conceptual foundations previously outlined, illustrating how *pesantren* can contribute to both religious and economic empowerment of students in the context of Aceh.

1. Results

By formalizing entrepreneurial education, *pesantren* can equip students with the skills needed to thrive in the modern economy, thereby contributing to both their personal development and the broader economic landscape. This approach not only fulfills the spiritual and educational needs of the students but also empowers them to become proactive contributors to society.

The results showed that the edupreneurship concept in Aceh's traditional *pesantren* has not yet been explicitly included in the curriculum. The main objective of learning is still to increase the students' Islamic knowledge. However, many entrepreneurship values were found in the current learning of *pesantren*, which can be the basis for developing entrepreneurship as a formal separate subject. This is because Islam has highlighted the importance of having a balance between prosperity in the present life and the deeds for the afterlife (Kemenag 2022, QS. 42:20: QS. 42:20: QS. 51:56)). In other words, seeking sustenance in the world is inseparable from doing good deeds for the afterlife (Kemenag, QS. 67:25, QS. 1:201). The values can be examined as follows.

a. Principles of voluntary service and the spirit of edupreneurship

Voluntary service performed sincerely and in accordance with Allah's command holds a noble position in Islamic teachings. Individuals who



dedicate themselves to teaching moral and religious values are regarded as fortunate (Kemenag, QS. 3:104; QS. 51:56). In the Acehese pesantren tradition, this spirit is expressed through *Beut* (reciting the Qur'an) and *Seumubeut* (teaching the Qur'an)—both considered sacred acts of service that carry implicit edupreneurial values.

Field data revealed that these practices are strongly encouraged among *pesantren* alumni, who are often urged to become imams in mosques or *meunasah* while also developing livelihoods through entrepreneurship. One informant stated, "*If you listen to the commandments, you will gain wealth. If you do not gain wealth, then your life will be sufficient*" (Interview with Suardi, 2024). This statement underscores the belief that obedience to religious values leads either to material success or a life of sufficiency, both of which are respected outcomes within the *pesantren* community.

Integrating voluntary service into edupreneurship fosters a synthesis between spiritual commitment and economic initiative. Through this model, *pesantrens* cultivate individuals who are not only religiously devout but also capable of contributing to the socioeconomic development of their communities.

b. A "Degree" from a teacher is a blessing and a spirit for entrepreneurship

Based on data obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted in several traditional *pesantrens* in Aceh, graduation is not merely marked by the awarding of formal diplomas but, more significantly, by the teacher's spiritual acknowledgment of a student's readiness to serve. While formal diplomas are increasingly issued in compliance with national educational standards (Zibbat & Hariri, 2024), the *pesantren* tradition emphasizes a more meaningful form of certification—informal endorsement rooted in religious and moral legitimacy.

This endorsement is often expressed verbally or written, reflecting the teacher's trust in the student's religious competence. As explained during an interview with one informant, "*I recognize that you have the competencies to be a*

religious leader" (Interview with informant). This symbolic act holds substantial spiritual value and reinforces the student's role within the religious community, which aligns with the prophetic tradition (Sahal, 2018).

Further evidence gathered during fieldwork illustrates the deep meaning associated with this recognition. One informant stated, "*A diploma, viewed as a legacy from Prophet Muhammad, holds sacred meaning for students at Islamic boarding schools. It provides reassurance, confidence, and legality to share their knowledge. Collective degree-giving prevents future conflicts by ensuring a common knowledge source and is seen as a blessing that brings success to students' lives*" (Interview with informant). These findings demonstrate that graduation in *pesantren* is both spiritual and practical, providing students with internal motivation and external validation.

Through inductive analysis of this interview data, it becomes evident that the dual-diploma structure—combining formal certification and informal spiritual validation—empowers graduates as religious leaders and ethical entrepreneurs. This dual legitimacy reinforces their credibility in religious and economic domains, aligning with the broader edupreneurship framework explored in this study.

c. To become a useful human as the basic value to achieve entrepreneurial success

In *pesantren* education in Aceh, the concept of becoming a *useful human being* is a central value that shapes students' orientation toward both religious and social responsibility. This principle emphasizes service to others as a path to spiritual and worldly success (Kemenag, QS. Al-Isra: 7) and is closely aligned with the ethos of edupreneurship.

As one informant described, "*A useful human being is someone who brings others closer to God and becomes a means of salvation for both this world and the hereafter*" (Interview with informant). This role is often realized through teaching, leading prayers, or establishing new *pesantren*—service forms that also open opportunities for social and economic engagement.



Another informant noted, “*Studying and preaching Islam build strong relationships, social acceptance, prestige, and respect, aiding business ventures*” (Interview with informant). The moral credibility gained through religious roles enables *pesantren* graduates to access wider networks and community support, which serve as intangible capital in entrepreneurial efforts.

These findings suggest that the drive to be useful is an ethical and religious ideal and a practical asset in navigating economic life, reinforcing the integration of spiritual and entrepreneurial development.

d. Teaching and learning at Islamic Boarding Schools equals practicing perseverance and patience

Teaching and learning in Acehnese *pesantren* demand high levels of perseverance and patience from both teachers and students. Limited facilities, diverse student backgrounds, and the complexity of religious texts—especially the classical *kitab kuning* (yellow book) written in Jawi—create significant challenges in the early stages of education.

According to one informant, “*Teaching and learning at pesantren demand immense patience, especially with unfamiliar bald yellow books written in Jawi (Malay Arabic), which cover various aspects of Islamic life. Teachers must be patient in sincerely guiding students of different ages, believing their efforts will be rewarded in the afterlife*” (Interview with informant). The process also includes moral guidance, character formation, and continuous correction of student behavior—tasks that require long-term dedication and emotional resilience.

These values are further reinforced through daily routines, communal prayers, and the cultivation of discipline. Another informant stated, “*Teachers must patiently guide students through intense learning phases to strengthen their beliefs, knowledge, and worship practices*” (Interview with informant). The repetitive nature of these practices gradually instills attitudes such as humility, obedience, and emotional control—character traits that closely align with foundational values in entrepreneurship.

The findings indicate that the learning environment in *pesantren* functions as a religious institution and a space for internalizing

persistence and long-term commitment—core attributes necessary for entrepreneurial success.

e. Collectivity and solidarity are among the basic elements of edupreneurship

Collectivity and solidarity are deeply embedded in the educational and social structure of traditional *pesantren* in Aceh. These values shape a communal environment where students learn religious knowledge and cooperation, mutual support, and loyalty—traits essential to the spirit of edupreneurship. The *pesantren* system fosters unity through shared routines, respect for teachers, and hierarchical order rooted in spiritual authority. As one informant explained, “Some senior figures of *pesantren* also have become common references to solve various problems. Teachers have spiritual references and mutual respect without blaming each other when different opinions arise” (Interview with informant). This culture of respect and cohesion contributes to stability and trust within the community.

Solidarity also manifests through collective action. Historical examples—such as the mass student strikes in 2015 and the significant mobilization during the Darul Islam movement—demonstrate how *pesantren* communities can mobilize around shared values and causes. These experiences nurture a sense of purpose and interconnectedness that extend beyond the *pesantren* walls. Such collective discipline and unity create an enabling environment for entrepreneurial initiatives. In *pesantren* culture, trust, obedience, and mutual assistance are moral imperatives and social assets. These values form a social foundation that supports collaborative entrepreneurship and strengthens the sustainability of student-led ventures.

f. The spirit of successful entrepreneurship and easy sustenance through marriage

Marriage is regarded in *pesantren* teachings as both a religious obligation and a pathway to economic stability. The findings reveal that



pesantren alumni are encouraged to view marriage as building emotional resilience, expanding social networks, and enhancing livelihood opportunities.

As explained by one informant, *“Marriage creates a supportive union between two people, often leading to the success of one partner through the support of their spouse and children. It brings tranquility, allowing energy and focus to be directed towards earning sustenance”* (Interview with informant). The belief that Allah increases sustenance for married individuals is deeply rooted in both scriptural sources (Kemenag, QS. An-Nahl:72) and local religious understanding.

Marriage also strengthens social legitimacy, which is crucial for entrepreneurial endeavors. Family networks provide emotional encouragement, administrative support, and access to broader community resources—factors that significantly ease the challenges of building and sustaining a business. Thus, in the *pesantren* worldview, marriage is not merely a personal or spiritual milestone but a strategic social foundation that supports the pursuit of entrepreneurial success and financial independence.

g. Spirit and the path to successful entrepreneurship through almsgiving

Almsgiving (*shadaqah*) occupies a central role in *pesantren* teachings, not only as a religious obligation but also as a pathway to entrepreneurial success. Findings from the field show that consistent acts of charity are believed to bring divine blessings, strengthen social relationships, and support sustainable livelihoods.

As described by one informant, *“Almsgiving removes sins, strengthens relationships between the rich and the poor, and increases capital for lower-class entrepreneurs”* (Interview with informant). Another informant emphasized the enduring value of continuous charity (*shadaqah jariyah*), stating, *“Voluntary donations, whether material or non-material, ensure ongoing rewards for the donor and foster social trust that supports business endeavors”* (Interview with informant).

Practical examples also reinforce these beliefs. Many alumni of Aceh's *pesantren*, such as those from *Pesantren* of Mudi Mesra, have achieved notable success in establishing educational institutions and businesses by consistently practicing almsgiving. As one graduate noted, *"The success we experience in business and school development is closely tied to the strength of our faith and the regular practice of almsgiving"* (Interview with informant).

These insights, drawn from participant narratives, illustrate that within the *pesantren* framework, almsgiving is not merely a religious act but also a strategic social investment. Charity fosters community solidarity, builds moral and economic capital, and ultimately facilitates entrepreneurial growth grounded in ethical and spiritual values.

h. Prayer as a key to success

Prayer (*doa*) is deeply integrated into *pesantren's* lives, serving not only as spiritual practice but also as a key source of motivation and perseverance in pursuing success, including entrepreneurial endeavors. Field data show that students are consistently guided to understand prayer as a form of direct communication with Allah, reinforcing both spiritual strength and practical resilience.

One informant highlighted, *"Prayer can change destiny. It strengthens our patience, sharpens our morals, and even inspires ideas for business development"* (Interview with informant). Another informant noted, *"At our pesantren, students are encouraged to perform sunnah prayers such as dhuhā and tahajjud daily because these practices are believed to bring sustenance and ease in achieving goals"* (Interview with informant).

Observations during fieldwork also revealed that communal and individual prayers are integrated into daily routines, creating a disciplined and spiritually charged environment. As expressed by another informant, *"Regular prayers build obedience and strengthen the intention to seek halal sustenance with the blessings of Allah"* (Interview with informant).

These findings indicate that in the *pesantren* tradition, prayer is positioned not only as a ritual act but as a powerful internal force that shapes students' perseverance, optimism, and ethical orientation—key attributes for success in both religious and entrepreneurial fields.



After analyzing the data through coding and categorization, several core entrepreneurial values emerged as consistently embedded within the learning processes of Acehnese *pesantrens*. These values are not formally presented as part of a standardized curriculum but are transmitted through day-to-day religious practices, teacher modeling, moral instruction, and communal activities. The values form an integrated foundation for edupreneurship, grounded in the *pesantren's* religious and cultural context. The following table summarizes the main entrepreneurial values identified in the *pesantren* learning environment, along with their practical manifestations:

Table 1. Entrepreneurial values in the learning of traditional *pesantrens* in Aceh

No.	Entrepreneurial Values	Indicators
1.	<i>Takzeem Keuguree</i> (Obedience to teachers)	Obey what teachers say, not complain, keep silent when a teacher makes a mistake, cover the teacher's disgrace, not blame the teacher for failure, and listen to parents and the teacher's friends.
2.	Self Discipline	Having work ethics and praying on time.
3.	Target-oriented	Having patience, embracing failures, and upholding Islamic laws
4.	Social influence values	Respected by others for having religious knowledge, being likable and sociable, and being active in religious activities.
5.	Religious	Having a strong religious belief and knowledge, doing the act of worship, dressing in an Islamic way, consistently doing a congregation prayer, and never being absent in praying.
6.	After life-oriente	Doing good deeds for the afterlife.
7.	Public speaking skills (<i>Muhadharah</i>)	Having good communication skills, citing Al-Qur'an and hadith as reliable sources; and having a good influence.
8.	Self Control	Avoid greed and selfishness, be open to criticism, have business ethics, and do not speak ill of others.
9.	Social Responsibility	Empowering local communities, considering the negative impacts of an action on society, and sharing with people in need.

Source: Processed results of 2024 research data

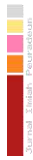
These values are consistent across different *pesantrens* and form the ethical backbone of students' actions after graduation. Their manifestation can be seen in both religious leadership roles and entrepreneurial activities pursued by alumni. This integrated formation suggests that *pesantrens*—although not explicitly entrepreneurial in design—can produce graduates with strong moral character and entrepreneurial potential rooted in Islamic values.

2. Discussion

The data analysis reveals that *pesantrens* teach entrepreneurship through two dimensions: *batiniyah* (spiritual values based on trust in Allah) and *lahiriyah* (practical religious propagation). These explicit and implicit values shape students' development. The *batiniyah* dimension covers values related to the desire to get closer to Allah for peace of mind by avoiding religious and cultural violations, putting sole trust in Allah, being socially responsible, and only expecting Allah's blessings (Bahri, 2024; Zulhamdi, 2024). These values correlate with the edupreneurship values stated by the Indonesian Ministry of National Education's Balitbang Curriculum Center Team 2010 (Ulwiyah, 2012; Ulpah, 2022).

This study's findings reveal a rich and layered integration between religious values and entrepreneurial potential in traditional *pesantrens* across Aceh. Through sustained observation, interviews, and document analysis, it becomes clear that while formal entrepreneurship education is largely absent in curriculum structure, *pesantrens* foster a deeply rooted and functional form of edupreneurship—one that emerges organically from their religious, cultural, and pedagogical ecosystem (Bahri, 2024; Halil, 2021).

This model, which blends *batiniyah* (inner spiritual values) and *lahiriyah* (practical expressions), reflects a holistic educational process where entrepreneurship is not treated as a distinct subject but as an ethical orientation interwoven with everyday religious discipline (Ulwiyah, 2012; Sari et al., 2021). The *batiniyah* dimension is internalized through acts of trust in God (*tawakkal*), sincere service, self-restraint, and moral intent—



values that are not only foundational to Islamic spirituality but also essential for entrepreneurial resilience and sustainability (Gusriani & Faulidi, 2017; Ishom, 2018). Meanwhile, the *lahiriyah* dimension is manifested in structured religious practices, social roles, and public service, such as leading prayers, teaching the Qur'an, and initiating community activities (Rizka et al., 2021; Arfan et al., 2023). These generate trust, legitimacy, and social capital—resources central to successful entrepreneurship.

This dual structure resonates with the broader theoretical framework offered by Ulwiyah (2012) and Sari et al., (2021), who argue for an integrated model of value-based entrepreneurship that transcends material profit to include ethical conduct, social contribution, and personal fulfillment. *Pesantrens* in Aceh operationalize this ideal not through formal instruction but through lived experience and embedded moral frameworks passed on from teachers to students across generations (Ma'arif et al., 2023; Suddahazai, 2023). In this sense, the *pesantren* serves as both a site of spiritual formation and a silent incubator of ethically conscious entrepreneurs.

Yet, this integration is not without complexity. One central tension lies in the *pesantren*'s commitment to tradition and cautious approach to institutional reform. While the formation of obedience (*takzeem keuguree*), patience, and discipline aligns with entrepreneurial character, it may also suppress critical thinking and independent decision-making, which are vital in modern economic ventures (Arfan et al., 2023; Suwendi et al., 2024). Similarly, the emphasis on textual mastery—particularly in *Syafi'ah fiqh*—fosters deep legal and moral understanding but may not readily translate into innovation or market responsiveness if not complemented by exposure to contemporary economic realities (Thoha & Hannan, 2022; Kenia et al., 2023). This limitation is further exacerbated by the absence of structured curriculum reform and pedagogical tools that could bridge the gap between religious orthodoxy and practical entrepreneurship (Halil, 2021; Mujiburrahman et al., 2024). Without deliberate curricular integration and institutional openness to innovation, *pesantrens* risk

maintaining a static model of education that prioritizes preservation over transformation (Tabrani ZA et al., 2021).

Another complexity is found in the *pesantren's* implicit approach to entrepreneurship. Without structured curriculum content or assessment tools, entrepreneurial learning becomes highly dependent on the individual charisma of teachers, the institution's culture, and the community's broader support (Mujiburrahman et al., 2024; Chotimah, 2025). This raises questions about scalability and sustainability, especially in contexts where pesantren leadership is not entrepreneurial by orientation (Suwendi et al., 2024; Lailatussaadah et al., 2023). As such, the existing edupreneurship model, while effective in some cases, remains fragile and inconsistent across institutions.

Despite these challenges, the study's findings offer significant implications. Practices such as *beut* (Qur'an recitation), *seumubeut* (teaching), almsgiving, marriage, and voluntary religious service reinforce social legitimacy and generate pathways for income, trust, and community engagement (Tabrani ZA et al., 2021). These practices become bridges between spiritual ideals and economic behavior, embodying what Gusriani et al., (2012) describe as the entrepreneurial legacy of the Prophet Muhammad—where business is a means of serving others, ensuring justice, and practicing self-discipline.

Furthermore, the structured collective life of the *pesantren*—marked by shared rituals, hierarchical respect, and spiritual authority—builds a form of social capital that supports group solidarity, risk-sharing, and mentorship. These collective dynamics are often absent in conventional entrepreneurial education, yet they constitute core enablers of entrepreneurship in *pesantren* communities (Hussain, 2025). The mass mobilizations historically associated with pesantren, such as those during political resistance or in defense of religious authority, indicate the organizational capacity and cohesion of these institutions—features that can be harnessed for economic development if properly directed (Suwendi et al., 2024; Sulaiman et al., 2024).



At a conceptual level, the Acehnese *pesantren* experience offers an alternative paradigm to the often secular and individualistic orientation of global entrepreneurship discourse. It presents a model where success is measured by profit, ethical influence, social usefulness, and divine reward. This aligns with the observations of Ishom (2018) and others who emphasize that Islamic entrepreneurship operates on a different epistemological basis—where worldly endeavors are inseparable from metaphysical intentions and communal responsibilities.

Internationally, this research provides a significant empirical contribution to the growing field of Islamic educational studies and value-based entrepreneurship, particularly regarding how faith-based institutions negotiate contemporary economic challenges. In many Muslim-majority contexts—such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sudan, and parts of North and West Africa—the modernization of religious education systems remains a contested issue. The persistent tension between preserving theological authenticity and addressing socioeconomic realities reflects a broader dilemma: integrating economic empowerment into religious curricula without diluting spiritual commitments.

The findings from Acehnese *pesantrens* offer a critical perspective on this debate. Rather than proposing abrupt reforms or secular economic frameworks, the *pesantren* model in Aceh shows that entrepreneurial values can emerge organically from religious traditions. Practices such as almsgiving, collective prayer, voluntary teaching, and the cultivation of patience and discipline inherently contain entrepreneurial elements when interpreted through a developmental lens (Muafiah et al., 2022; Fadha, 2024). This indicates that adaptation and modernization of religious education are possible not by rejecting tradition but by revitalizing latent potentials already embedded within established spiritual practices (Siregar et al., 2023).

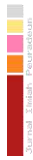
Such a model holds meaningful implications for international agencies, NGOs, and Islamic educational networks seeking to foster community resilience and economic independence. Instead of introducing external entrepreneurial models that may conflict with local religious epistemologies,

interventions could focus on supporting indigenous frameworks—aligning economic empowerment initiatives with theological and cultural authenticity. In this way, *pesantrens*—and, by extension, similar faith-based institutions—can serve as authentic agents of both spiritual and economic development.

Moreover, the *pesantren* model speaks to a growing global discourse on the urgent need for ethical entrepreneurship. In light of mounting ecological crises, widening economic inequalities, and widespread corporate irresponsibility, there is increasing recognition within global policy and academic circles that entrepreneurship cannot be value-neutral. Frameworks emphasizing ethical conduct, social responsibility, environmental stewardship, and communal well-being are being sought after. In this context, *pesantrens* present a living example of how religious traditions, if thoughtfully engaged, can contribute to the formation of entrepreneurs who are not only economically capable but also morally grounded, socially compassionate, and spiritually anchored (Mashuri et al., 2024; Azizah & Mardiana, 2024).

The lessons drawn from Aceh's *pesantrens* could thus inform broader global discussions on alternative models of entrepreneurial education—models that resist the instrumentalization of education solely for market demands and instead prioritize human dignity, communal solidarity, and moral responsibility. Particularly in regions grappling with postcolonial educational restructuring or in multicultural societies seeking to harmonize tradition with modernization, the Acehnese experience provides a case study in balancing faith, identity, and economic agency.

Finally, this study offers a methodological contribution to international research approaches by emphasizing the importance of culturally embedded, inductively generated insights. In contrast to imposing generalized frameworks across diverse Muslim societies, this research highlights the need for context-specific understanding that respects local religious, historical, and sociocultural dynamics. In doing so, it promotes a more inclusive and pluralistic view of educational and



economic development—one that acknowledges the transformative potentials residing within traditional institutions like the *pesantren*.

In conclusion, traditional *pesantrens* in Aceh, though often perceived as resistant to change, demonstrate that deeply contextualized and sustainable models of edupreneurship are possible. By illuminating, strengthening, and formalizing the existing values nurtured within these institutions, educational reform efforts can bridge the divide between religious heritage and modern economic demands. This approach not only benefits local communities but also contributes valuable paradigms to the international quest for ethically grounded, socially responsive, and spiritually integrated models of entrepreneurship and education.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that traditional *pesantrens* in Aceh, despite their strong adherence to classical religious education, have embedded within their learning processes a set of entrepreneurial values that align with the broader goals of edupreneurship. Through spiritual practices, moral instruction, and daily communal life, *pesantrens* organically foster competencies such as trustworthiness, perseverance, self-discipline, social responsibility, and religiously grounded economic motivation. These values, though not formally systematized within the curriculum, form a holistic foundation that enables *pesantren* graduates to act as both religious leaders and socially responsible entrepreneurs.

The research findings demonstrate that the formation of entrepreneurial character in *pesantrens* operates through a dual dimension: the *batiniyah* values—faith, sincerity, and divine reliance—and the *lahiriyah* practices—service, solidarity, and practical leadership in religious and social settings. These dimensions create a distinctive model of edupreneurship that does not sever religious commitments but instead roots economic engagement within spiritual and ethical frameworks.

However, the study also highlights significant challenges. The lack of a formalized, structured edupreneurship curriculum means that the

internalization of entrepreneurial values depends largely on the individual charisma of teachers and the strength of communal traditions. Furthermore, while *pesantrens* succeed in forming religious and moral character, there remains a gap in equipping students with critical thinking skills, technological literacy, and systematic business knowledge necessary for navigating modern economic realities.

Despite these limitations, the Acehnese *pesantren* experience offers a vital paradigm for Islamic education globally. It shows that entrepreneurship education need not be imported as a secular, external model but can be nurtured from within religious traditions themselves. The Acehnese model demonstrates how Islamic boarding schools can contribute to national economic development while simultaneously preserving theological integrity, offering valuable lessons for Muslim societies facing similar tensions between tradition and modernity.

At an international level, this study adds to the discourse on Islamic educational reform and value-based entrepreneurship by providing a culturally grounded, empirically rich case study. It suggests that strengthening indigenous educational traditions, rather than replacing them, holds the key to building ethical, resilient, and community-oriented entrepreneurs in Muslim-majority societies. In a global context increasingly seeking ethically grounded economic models, the *pesantren*-based approach to edupreneurship emerging from Aceh stands as a compelling and timely alternative.

Future research should extend this inquiry by exploring the application of structured edupreneurship models across a wider range of *pesantrens*, examining variations across regions, and integrating longitudinal studies to assess long-term impacts on alumni's socioeconomic contributions. Quantitative approaches could also complement qualitative insights, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the scalability and sustainability of edupreneurship within faith-based education systems.



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