

## Santripreneurs: The Rise of Islamic Innovators in Business, Science, and Technology

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### Abstract

Students who become change agents in various domains, such as business, science, and technology, are known as santripreneurs. They act as innovators who integrate Islamic values with an entrepreneurial spirit and the use of modern technology. Social santripreneurs contribute by developing sharia economics, halal fintech, and digital-based startups based on Islamic ethical principles in the business world. In addition, they also utilize artificial intelligence for education and preaching. This study explores the role of santri as drivers of innovation in the digital era with a qualitative approach through literature studies and phenomenological analysis. The study results show that Islamic boarding schools have great potential as centers of innovation that integrate religious knowledge with technological developments. The conclusion of this study emphasizes the importance of increasing santri's access to digital literacy, entrepreneurship training, and collaboration with various stakeholders to encourage an inclusive and sustainable innovation ecosystem.

**Keywords:** Business innovation, Digital transformation, Santripreneurs, Sharia economy, Science and Technology.

### Introduction

The growing trend of entrepreneurship among Islamic students, or "santripreneurs," has become a remarkable phenomenon in the educational landscape. (Hameed & Irfan, 2019; Ummah, Susanto, and Zh 2025). Research has shown that entrepreneurship is deeply rooted in Islamic culture, with the Prophet Muhammad and his companions serving as inspiring examples of successful entrepreneurs. Sometimes, Muslims have lost some of their confidence and sense of innovation, but recent efforts have aimed to reignite the entrepreneurial spirit within the Islamic community. One such example is the presence of coffee shops within Islamic boarding schools, such as the Al Wafi Islamic Boarding School in Pengasinan, Depok. In today's digital era, students of Islamic boarding schools have shown great potential as agents of change, especially in developing sharia-based businesses. (Alhifni et al., 2019; Khusumadewi, 2021)

This study aims to examine the phenomenon of santripreneurs, namely students who develop an entrepreneurial mindset while adhering to Islamic values. This study was conducted with two approaches, namely literature study and phenomenological analysis. Literature study was conducted by examining various scientific sources, such as journals, books, and research reports related to students as agents of change in business, science, and technology innovation. (Statti & Torres, 2021). Furthermore, a phenomenological approach is used to understand the subjective experiences of students in developing businesses, innovating in the field of technology, and balancing religious and modern education.

## Literature Review

The integration of entrepreneurship and Islamic culture has been a subject of study for researchers 2024; Vargas-Hernández. Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia have also responded to this trend by incorporating entrepreneurship education into their curriculum. (Naimah et al., 2020) (Kunaifi et al., 2023) This not only equips students with business skills but also aligns with the Islamic principles of self-sufficiency and independence. Research has found that Islamic entrepreneurship is not just a modern concept but has deep roots in Islamic history and teachings. Indeed, the lives of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions demonstrate the compatibility between Islamic values and entrepreneurship (Fajri et al., 2024) (Kunaifi et al., 2023) (Sudiapermana & Muslikhah, 2020).

Moreover, some Islamic boarding schools, such as the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Kemuningsari Lor Village, Jember Regency, have actively implemented strategies to empower student entrepreneurship. (Naimah et al., 2020). Our research was conducted in Fisabilillah Islamic Boarding School (YASFI), Bekasi City, which has about 113 students and is situated in Kampung Sawah, offering a variety of sharia-based economic activities. There is still little use of technology and digitalization in entrepreneurship.

*The Fisabilillah Islamic Boarding School (YASFI)* was formed and established in 1977, which was marked by the establishment of a basic-level madrasah (Madrasah Diniyah Awaliyah) and a legal entity in 1987. It is located in Kampung Sawah in a rural community amid heterogeneous religious people, with the physical image of a neighboring mosque with two large churches not more than 300 meters apart, as well as several more churches that are no more than 1 km away. The foundation has 1750 students/students supported by approximately 120 teachers/ustadz. Currently, YASFI has been able to inventory some orphans and underprivileged children in a Dormitory/Cottage. Each foster child is covered by the foundation, both basic needs and education, health, and others. For the business that has been operating up to this point, direct selling activities and selling garden harvests to locals are all documented traditionally and have not been examined with the aid of any applications. Examining santripreneur, students who adopt an entrepreneurial perspective while upholding Islamic principles is the goal of this study.

This study was conducted with two approaches, namely literature study and phenomenological analysis. Literature study was conducted by examining various scientific sources, such as journals, books, and research reports related to students as agents of change in business, science, and technology innovation. (Statti & Torres, 2021). The multifaceted nature of innovation and change has been extensively explored in scholarly research, with innovation defined as the generation of novel concepts that are then transformed into tangible products, efficient processes, or valuable services (Alshwayat et al., 2022). Recognizing the pivotal role of users as potential wellsprings of groundbreaking ideas has gained prominence in the innovation literature (Levine & Prietula, 2013).

Furthermore, a phenomenological approach is used to understand the subjective experiences of students in developing businesses, innovating in the field of technology, and balancing religious and modern education. Researchers can gain

a holistic understanding of the phenomenon of students by combining information from the literature and personal experiences. It also emphasizes the significance of aligning business activities with Islamic principles, such as fairness, transparency, and social responsibility. In conclusion, this study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the Santripreneur phenomenon and provide insights into how it can be further developed to promote economic empowerment and social change in Muslim communities.

The transformation of sustainable community empowerment based on Islamic boarding schools gives several impacts on training entrepreneurship, independence of santri and prosperity of the society (Sudiapermana & Muslikhah, 2020).

## Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with literature study methods and phenomenological analysis. Data was collected through literature reviews related to the development of santripreneurs in Indonesia and the world, as well as case studies on student entrepreneurship programs in Islamic boarding schools. The analysis was carried out by examining the role of students in encouraging business, science, and technological innovation, as well as identifying supporting and inhibiting factors in the development of the santripreneur ecosystem.

Table 1. Literature Review of Santripreneurship

No.	Topic	Focus of Discussion	Author / Source	Approach
1	Concept of Santripreneur	Combination of santri values and entrepreneurial practices rooted in Islamic ethics	Hidayat (2018)	Literature Study
2	Role of Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren) in Entrepreneurship	Pesantren as educational centers and business incubators	Asnawi & Susanto (2019)	Literature Study
3	Innovation by Santri in Science and Technology	Contribution of santri to Islamic-based digital and technological solutions	Karim (2020)	Literature Study
4	Islamic Value-Based Entrepreneurship	Islamic entrepreneurial values (e.g., honesty, trustworthiness, wisdom, communication)	Wahyuni (2017)	Literature Study
5	Spiritual Experience of Santripreneurs	Business as a spiritual journey for santri	Yusuf & Rahman (2021)	Phenomenological Approach

6	Theoretical Framework of Phenomenology	Exploring the subjective meaning of experience in innovation and entrepreneurship	Moustakas (1994)	Phenomenological Theory
7	Challenges and Opportunities for Santripreneurs	Digitalization, funding access, and government support for pesantren-based entrepreneurship	Nugroho (2022)	Literature Study

## Results and Discussion

The results of the study show that pesantren that integrate religious education and entrepreneurship can produce students who are innovative and adaptive to the changing times. Business training and incubation programs at Islamic boarding schools have been proven to improve students' digital skills, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial spirit. Santripreneur also plays an important role in the development of the sharia economy, business digitalization, and the use of technology for da'wah and education. The main challenge faced is limited access to technology, funding, and business networks. However, collaboration with various stakeholders, such as the government, universities, and Islamic financial institutions, can be a solution to strengthen the santripreneur innovation ecosystem.

The results of the study show that students have a very strategic role as agents of change in the fields of business, science, and technology. Through the integration of Islamic values and the spirit of innovation, students can develop various entrepreneurial initiatives that are relevant to the needs of the times. One of the real contributions of santripreneur is the development of the Islamic economy, halal fintech, and digital startups based on Islamic principles. These innovations not only drive the growth of the creative and digital economy but also strengthen an inclusive and ethical business ecosystem.

Digital transformation is one of the main drivers of santripreneur's progress. The use of digital technology, such as artificial intelligence for education and da'wah, as well as digital marketing for pesantren business units, has increased competitiveness and expanded the reach of students' businesses to the global market. However, this study also found that there are challenges faced by santripreneurs, especially related to limited access to technology, funding, and business networks. To overcome these obstacles, cross-sectoral collaboration with the government, universities, and Islamic financial institutions is urgently needed.

In addition, increasingly open collaboration opportunities have a positive impact on the development of a sustainable and inclusive innovation ecosystem. Synergy between Islamic boarding schools, the government, and the private sector can accelerate the adoption of technology and strengthen the entrepreneurial capacity of students. Overall, the role of santripreneurs has been proven to make a significant contribution to the economic empowerment of the people, job creation, and strengthening the community-based economy. These findings affirm the importance of developing santripreneur as a national economic development strategy based on Islamic values.

Table 2. Discussion Result

<b>Aspects</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
The Role of Santri	<p>Santri plays the role of an agent of change in the fields of business, science, and technology through the integration of Islamic values and innovation.</p> <p>This role strengthens the position of pesantren as a center for the development of superior human resources that are adaptive to the challenges of the digital era.</p>
Business Innovation	<p>Santripreneur develops Sharia economics, halal fintech, and digital startups based on Islamic principles</p> <p>Sharia-based business innovation opens up new opportunities in the creative and digital economy sectors, as well as strengthens an inclusive and ethical business ecosystem.</p>
Digital Transformation	<p>Adoption of digital technology, such as AI for education and da'wah, as well as digital marketing for pesantren businesses.</p> <p>Digital transformation enhances santripreneurs' competitiveness and expands the business's reach to the global market.</p>
Challenge	<p>Limited access to technology, funding, and business networks is still the main obstacle.</p> <p>Collaboration with the government, universities, and Islamic financial institutions is urgently needed to overcome these obstacles.</p>
Collaboration Opportunities	<p>Cross-sector collaboration supports the development of a sustainable and inclusive innovation ecosystem.</p> <p>Synergy between Islamic boarding schools, the government, and the private sector can accelerate the adoption of technology and strengthen the entrepreneurial capacity of students.</p>
Social Impact	<p>Santripreneur contributes to the economic empowerment of the people, job creation, and the strengthening of the community-based economy.</p> <p>This positive impact emphasizes the importance of developing santripreneur as a national economic development strategy based on Islamic values.</p>

## Conclusion

Santripreneur is an agent of change that can bridge Islamic values with business, science, and technological innovation. Empowering students through entrepreneurship education, digital training, and cross-sector collaboration is essential to create an inclusive and sustainable innovation ecosystem. Pesantren has great potential as a center for the development of Muslim innovators who can compete in the digital economy era and present solutions based on Islamic values to today's global challenges.

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