

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

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### ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic that has hit the world has had a very significant impact on the economic and educational sectors of Islamic boarding schools. The institutions are commonly considered to have less economic resilience. This study aims to formulate a prototype to encourage the establishment of an independent pesantrenpreneur in Indonesia. The study applied descriptive qualitative approach to examine the implementation of the OPOP program in mentor pesantren and fostered pesantren. The paradigm used in this study is interpretive-constructivist. 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 running the pesantren business could not be separated from several factors: 1.) Islamic boarding schools have superior quality products according to market segmentation. 2.) Pesantren has an official business entity that is managed professionally to ensure the accountability of the business entity. 3.) Pesantren has a strong network with strategic partners to support business continuity. 4.) Islamic boarding schools have creative and innovative steps in terms of business management, products, and marketing. 5.) Islamic boarding schools consistently implement sharia principles to ensure product halalness and the application of Islamic values in 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 Covid-19 pandemic that has hit the world since late 2019 has tremendously impacted all sectors globally. Economic uncertainty is one of the impacts predicted to last long and influence the educational sector in pesantren.<sup>1</sup> Through the National Economic Recovery Program regulated in Law Number 2 of 2020, the government has allocated Rp 695 trillion as a stimulus to reduce the impact of Covid-19. Among these stimuli, Rp 2.6 trillion is allocated and distributed to approximately 26,000 pesantrens. This fact further implies that most pesantrens still need affirmative assistance to be economically independent.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of building

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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)

the independence of pesantren in various fields has been one of the discourses that have emerged in scientific studies in recent years.<sup>3,4,5</sup> Independence is one of the most prominent characteristics of pesantren<sup>6</sup>. Due to its independence, pesantren as a subculture has management not co-opted by any parties.<sup>7</sup> Amidst the rapid flow of

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<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*:

globalization and the capitalization of education, pesantren, as the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia<sup>8</sup>, is required to be able to carry out institutional transformation by referring, for example, to four aspects, namely: resilience, formation of thinker cadres, the birthplace of young scholars, and quality orientation.<sup>9</sup>

One strategy to enhance the economic resilience of pesantren is through the pesantrenpreneur program.<sup>10</sup> The term pesantrenpreneur comes from two words, "pesantren" and "entrepreneur." Pesantren is an Islamic educational institution that consists of five elements: the boarding school, mosque, teaching of classical Islamic texts, students, and kiai.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, an entrepreneur engages in an independent activity with the characteristics of being perceptive in identifying new product opportunities, having creativity, and being innovative in developing their business.<sup>12</sup><sup>13</sup> Therefore, when these

two terms are combined, 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 pesantrenpreneur, the West Java Provincial Government launched the One Pesantren One Product (OPOP) program, which the East Java Provincial Government in the following year later duplicated. In its implementation, the boarding schools work with the local government, academics, entrepreneurs, media, and the wider community. However, during its two years of operation, the OPOP program faced many challenges.<sup>15</sup><sup>16</sup><sup>17</sup>

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*Journal of Social and Islamic Culture*. No.2 Vol. 23 (December 2015)

<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>Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren Studi tentang Pandangan Hidup Kiai*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1982)

<sup>12</sup>Mufidatul Himmah, Abdullah, Maknunatun Navisah, "Student Creativity

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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 Fadhillah Hasib, "Islamic Community-based Business Cooperation and Sustainable Development Goals: A Case of Pesantren Coomunity in Indonesia," *International*

There are four main problems in implementing OPOP. Firstly, some pesantrens still have a conservative mindset in accepting the idea of economic independence. Secondly, few pesantrens are ready and committed to developing their products. Thirdly, only a few pesantren human resources have adequate entrepreneurship capacity. Fourthly, the market still sees pesantren-produced products as second-class products that could be of better quality, so the sustainability of the products is doubtful. Out of 26,974 pesantrens in Indonesia, only 5.94% of pesantrens (1,574 from West Java and 30 from East Java) have participated in the OPOP program.<sup>18</sup> It means that the coverage of this program is still relatively small. For example, in the virtual pesantren product exhibition in West Java in early December 2020, only 500 pesantrens participated out of 1,574 participants who previously participated in OPOP. This shows that the impact and sustainability of the program is still around 32% (<https://opop.jabarprov.go.id/temu-bisnis-produk-pesantren-jabar-bukukan-transaksi-rp2102-miliar/>).

Among the few pesantrens

that have successfully implemented the OPOP program are Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School in West Java and Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School in East Java. Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School was founded in 1934 and is managed by the third generation, namely K.H. Fuad Affandi. This pesantren develops businesses in agriculture and plantation by running the pesantrenpreneur concept through the Alifmart Islamic Boarding School Cooperative (Kopontren).<sup>19</sup> In its implementation, the pesantren students at Al-Ittifaq are equipped with essential knowledge and skills in agribusiness entrepreneurship, from planting, harvesting, and packaging to marketing products to various regions.<sup>20</sup> The planted products are diverse, such as carrots, cabbage, strawberries, and oranges. Every day, production is carried out by students who are accompanied by mentors, in this case, alumni of Al-Ittifaq pesantren. The agricultural products are then marketed in various Bandung, Jakarta, and Tangerang

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*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)

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

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<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)

supermarkets.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School in West Java, Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School in East Java also has 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 in Graha Tirta Housing, Waru, Sidoarjo. The pesantren was founded in April 2006 by K.H. Muhammad Zakki, applying the spirit of "Jihad Entrepreneurship."<sup>23</sup> With a strong entrepreneurial spirit, Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School has been able to create its flagship product, i.e., coffee.<sup>24</sup> As a result, the

pesantren has successfully developed its coffee business, which has penetrated the domestic and export markets.<sup>25</sup>

Following the emergence of the pesantrenpreneur program in 2015, this trend has attracted academics to study entrepreneurship programs in pesantren or the development of pesantren's economic resilience.<sup>26,27,28,29</sup>

Hartawan focused his research on entrepreneurship programs and their implementation and factors that support and hinder entrepreneurship programs at Anwarul Huda Islamic Boarding School in Malang. The results of his research explained that the

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<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 (Febrary 2019)

<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)

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<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 in pesantren aims to instill and train the spirit of economic independence among students while also supporting pesantren's economy. The efforts developed by the pesantren include snack and beverage products such as refillable mineral water to meet the surrounding community's needs. However, the limited business network and lack of human resources have been dominant factors hindering the growth of pesantren businesses.

Another study on entrepreneurship in pesantren can be seen in Ali's work. The research conducted at Pondok Pesantren Daarul Ulum wal Hikam Yogyakarta focuses on entrepreneurial practices carried out in the pesantren. The results show that the pesantren has several business fields, such as industry, trade and services, food, and creative industries. These business fields are developed based on the increasing market demand. In addition to supporting factors, pesantren also faces several challenges. One of the main challenges is the limited capital and business management system. Due to the various business fields developed by the pesantren, attention is needed in capital and managerial aspects.

Furthermore, Afidah focuses on the views of students on entrepreneurship and the process of instilling entrepreneurship in students. It shows that the entrepreneurship program run at

the pesantren broadened students' horizons about the importance of entering the business world. Furthermore, the guidance of students in the business field through the enculturing entrepreneurship program carried out at the pesantren shows positive results. This is evident from the emergence of several students or alumni who have various types of independent businesses.

Unlike Hartawan, Ali, and Afidah, Hafidh and Badrudin researched pesantrens with relatively established entrepreneurship programs. The pesantrens are members of the OPOP program with a significant business turnover. Their research aimed to study the independent business processes run by Pondok Pesantren Ar-Risalah Cijantung IV Ciamis. The research showed that the pesantren's entrepreneurship program focuses on livestock, fisheries, agriculture, and waste processing. The five business fields managed independently by the pesantren provided significant economic benefits to the pesantren and the surrounding community.

The above studies portray that some pesantrens have traditionally managed businesses with a limited market segment, while others have developed businesses with more modern management and broader market reach. Nevertheless, these research results cannot yet be used as a basis to identify common obstacles faced by several pesantrens in implementing the OPOP program, as well as effective

strategies for developing entrepreneurship in pesantrens by relying on a flagship product that is professionally managed from the production phase to marketing.

This research is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the factors that hinder the implementation of the OPOP program in East Java and West Java, as well as to find OPOP development strategies to encourage the economic resilience of pesantrens. In addition, this research is expected to produce a policy paper for the Ministry of Religious Affairs to encourage the establishment of self-sufficient pesantrenpreneurs in Indonesia.

## METHODS

This research applied 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 towards independent pesantrenpreneurs. The paradigm used in this research is interpretive-constructivist,<sup>31</sup> meaning that research data from various reliable sources are interpreted based on understanding specific theories to

construct new concepts that can be transferred in similar contexts.<sup>32</sup>

The research was conducted at one pesantren in West Java and the other in East Java. These two provinces have the highest number of pesantrens and santri in Indonesia, thus having a high level of representation and credibility. 47.5% of all pesantrens in Indonesia are located in these two provinces [<https://ditpdpontren.kemenag.go.id/pdpp/statistik>]. The two pesantrens were Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School in Bandung, West Java and Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo, East Java.

The research data were taken from: (1) interviews with pesantren stakeholders, (2) supporting documents such as strategic plans and program reports, and (3) the implementation of the OPOP program. Data collected through interviews, document review, and observation were analyzed using the interactive analysis method involving three interrelated and interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and verification and conclusion.<sup>33</sup>

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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)

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

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

## 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. In its implementation, the program is managed by the Islamic Boarding School Cooperative (Kopontren). In addition to providing services for students' daily needs, Kopontren Al-Ittifaq coordinates and supervises several farmer groups around the pesantren to improve their agricultural products' quality and quantity and distribute them to a broader range of consumers.

As the front guard in managing the OPOP program at Al-Ittifaq, Kopontren has flagship agribusiness products. Commencing the program in 2018, Kopontren Al-Ittifaq only oversaw three farmer groups in Bandung Regency. However, at the beginning of 2021, the Kopontren successfully empowered nine farmer groups (three times the number of its inception). With an average of 30 members for each group, the number of farmers empowered through the OPOP program reached 270 people across three regencies: Bandung, West Bandung, and Cianjur.

The increasing number of farmer (group) partners of Kopontren Al-Ittifaq during 2018-2021 is inseparable from the higher demand for agricultural products in the market, particularly during the pandemic since mid-2020. The CEO

of Kopontren Al-Ittifaq acknowledged this issue<sup>34</sup>:

*"Alhamdulillah. During the pandemic, when people are not very active and productive outside their homes, we have a special blessing. The demand for vegetables in modern markets that become the partners of Kopontren is increasing. Maybe people are shopping more at modern markets during the pandemic because they feel safer and more comfortable there, and they also want to have good food stocks at home during PPKM."*  
(Interview, 02/09/2021)

The increasing demand for vegetables in modern markets during the pandemic, as revealed by Gus Irawan, has spurred Kopontren Al-Ittifaq to cooperate with OPOP partners from larger-scale farmers and establish relationships to distribute agricultural products, especially vegetables, widely. Throughout 2020, for example, Kopontren Al-Ittifaq successfully increased the distribution of large-scale agricultural shipments through cooperation with more than 91 Islamic boarding schools in West Java. All parties involved in the cooperation have the same orientation and goal: to provide fresh

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

agricultural products at the national level and for export demands.

With the higher demand for fresh vegetables, Kopontren Al-Ittifaq strives to maintain supply and price stability by distributing its agricultural products in traditional markets, modern markets, and restaurants in Bandung and Jakarta. This aims to increase the selling value of vegetables as time goes by. Along with the increase in vegetable prices, this also has a positive impact on the welfare of the farmers under the auspices of the Kopontren. In addition, maintaining market price stability is believed to reduce inflation in several regions and increase the agricultural sector's contribution to the Regional Gross Domestic Product (PDRB).

To increase the selling value of agricultural products, Kopontren Al-Ittifaq creates market segmentation. It is essential because agricultural products are not processed in factories, like shoes, where they will have almost the same quality. In addition, many factors may influence the harvest, such as pest attacks and weather. Gus Setia Irawan, the CEO of Kopontren Al-Ittifaq, also acknowledged this:

*"Agricultural business, of course, is related to many factors that influence the production of good quality products. We often experience crop failure due to weather factors or pest attacks. Therefore, we create market segmentation so that all post-harvest*

*products can be utilized as best as possible."*

*(Interview, 02/09/2021)*

Through market segmentation, all agricultural products can be distributed according to the needs of each region. At the implementational level, Kopontren Al-Ittifaq classifies its agribusiness products into three parts: products with grades A, B, and C. If all agricultural products can be sold through this mapping, this situation will impact the farmers' welfare under the auspices of Kopontren Al-Ittifaq.

Kopontren Al-Ittifaq has its standards in selecting harvested products. For example, grade A products are distributed to large companies and modern markets, such as PT Lion Super Indo, Yogya Department Store, and AEON, located in Bandung and Jakarta. The agricultural products prepared by Kopontren Al-Ittifaq are oriented towards the invoices sent by these agencies, such as the level of maturity for fruits and the level of freshness for vegetables. Unlike the previous segmentation, grade B products are prepared to be distributed through medium to high businesses, such as restaurants and tourist sites with shopping centers. Meanwhile, grade C products are extensively distributed through traditional markets.

Since its first supply of high-quality vegetables to modern markets in 1993, Kopontren Al-Ittifaq has continuously innovated to be sustainable in agribusiness. Moreover, in response to global challenges and technological

advancements, Kopontren Al-Ittifaq sells its agricultural products online and has successfully developed a particular online shopping application called Alifmart, which can be accessed at <https://alifmart.online> or downloaded from Google Play Store or the App Store. This is an effort to digitize products and reach a broader market in the future.

Kopontren Al-Ittifaq also established the Alifmart Store in January 2021. The products offered are fresh vegetables and fruits obtained directly from the supported farmers. In addition, processed food products, fashion items, and handicrafts produced by Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittifaq and the surrounding community are also available at the store. Consumers are also spoiled with pick-up and delivery facilities. Kopontren Al-Ittifaq has collaborated with 20 expeditions for its delivery. The payment methods are varied, reaching 24, including ATM transfers, Shopeepay, Gopay, Alfamidi, Alfamart, and Indomaret. This ease the buyers to shop for fresh vegetables and fruits anytime and anywhere. The Alifmart online shopping application, available on Google Play Store or the App Store, currently has over 100 active users.

Although it has only been operating for less than a year, the Alifmart Store has developed significantly. In March 2021, the revenue generated reached around 7.5 million within the first three months. This certainly adds to the series of extraordinary achievements

of Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittifaq through its Kopontren.

Gus Setia Irawan, the CEO of Kopontren Al-Ittifaq, acknowledged this success:

*"Alhamdulillah, the innovation in terms of product digitalization is well-received by the market. We also did not expect to achieve significant revenue within a short period of time (3 months of operation), which is about 7.5 million in March of this year."*  
(Interview, 02/09/2021)

Kopontren Al-Ittifaq collaborates with various parties to continue its export-oriented business, e.g., Bank Indonesia in 2014, JICA Japan in 2016, and PUM Netherlands in 2017. These three institutions support Kopontren Al-Ittifaq, along with all the supported farmers and pesantren businesses in the agricultural sector, to continue to develop from an institutional, business, or capacity-building standpoint. Therefore, Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittifaq, through its Kopontren, has become one of the pesantrens that successfully develop its business through the One Pesantren One Product (OPOP) program.

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

Since the inauguration of One Pesantren One Product (OPOP) by the Governor of East Java in 2019,

Mukmin Mandiri has become one of the 30 boarding schools ready to pioneer the implementation of the program. K.H. Dr. Muhammad Zakki, M.Si., the founder and guardian of the boarding school, leads the OPOP program at Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School.

Mukmin Mandiri has attracted attention due to its concept of "santripreneurship," which has been implemented since 2012, coinciding with the establishment of Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School 2 in Tulungagung Regency. Through its flagship program, the Hulu Hilir Kopi Santripreneur (Upstream-Downstream Santripreneur Coffee), the pesantren involves its students, known as "santri," in learning how to process coffee, from planting coffee seeds to processing the dried beans into roasted (powdered) coffee, packaging, and marketing the products.

The basic foundation for the involvement of students in the Islamic boarding school's coffee business is to provide an opportunity for students who live in the boarding house to learn not only about religion but also entrepreneurship. In addition to learning the basic concepts of business, they can apply the knowledge they have gained in the field. Practical mentoring is expected to motivate students from lower-middle-class backgrounds to become successful entrepreneurs after graduating from the Islamic Boarding School.

Mukmin Mandiri's coffee types vary greatly, ranging from Kopi Mahkota Raja, Kopi Doa, Kopi

Songo, Kopi Tjap Kiaiku, and Kopi Greng Lanang. The numerous variations of coffee produced by the pesantren are tailored to meet market demands. The majority of these coffee types are marketed domestically; but one type of coffee, Kopi Mahkota Raja, has successfully penetrated the international market in Australia. The founder and caretaker of the pesantren acknowledged this issue<sup>35</sup>:

*"Our products have gone international since August 2016. We have never thought before that the coffee produced by our santri (students) could compete in the national and international markets. Kopi Mahkota Raja was first exported to Australia." (Interview, 20/10/2021)*

In marketing the santri-produced coffee products, Kiai Zakki did not hold back in promoting the products to the extent that they could penetrate the international market. Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri has partnered with one of the famous Indonesian artists, Ayu Azhari, as a brand ambassador. Ayu Azhari helps with marketing processes directly during exhibitions and online through social media. The result was fantastic; the market demand for pesantren-produced coffee products was very high, with a monthly production capacity reaching 30 tons.

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<sup>35</sup>Muhammad Zakki, *Interview on OPOP in Mukmin Mandiri Pesantren*, (20 October 2021)

Moreover, Kiai Zakki, a millennial entrepreneur, collaborates with private television stations in East Java, such as JTV and SBO, to advertise his products during program breaks. Although this requires considerable money, he is willing to take risks. However, during the current pandemic, television advertising activities are reduced. This is done to maintain business stability in the era of COVID-19.

*"Besides collaborating with one of the famous artists in Indonesia, Ayu Azhari, we also advertise our products on private television stations in East Java, such as JTV, SBO, and many others. However, because of the current pandemic, we have reduced our television advertising budget to maintain the stability of the coffee business we manage." (Interview, 20/10/2021)*

In line with Kiai Zakki's statement, the current COVID-19 pandemic has extraordinary impacts on small, medium, and large-scale businesses. However, this does not mean that the demand for Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri's coffee products has decreased; In contrast, it has increased. One of the driving factors for the increase is probably because people, especially in Java Island, are familiar with the term "ngopi" (coffee drinking). A coffee beverage accompanies almost every occasion. In addition, the proliferation of small-scale coffee

shops to larger cafes has positively impacted coffee entrepreneurs.

*"Although to some extent this pandemic has affected the pesantren's coffee business, the sales trend of our coffee is relatively stable and continues to increase. This is because the people, especially those in East Java, are always associated with "cangkrukan" (hanging out) and "ngopi" (coffee drinking)." (Interview, 20/10/2021)*

The high number of coffee enthusiasts and consumers has brought its own blessings to Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri, as stated by Kiai Zakki. Over time, various regions in Indonesia have shown a decrease in COVID-19 transmission cases. This has helped the economy stabilize slowly, and the pesantren's businesses under the OPOP program have grown more rapidly, including one coffee business at Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri. Until now, the coffee products processed by the pesantren have reached a broader international market, even penetrating markets in Malaysia, China, and Dubai.

Efforts to digitize the products have already been made, starting from marketing the pesantren's coffee products on the e-commerce platform, Bukalapak. However, this needs to be developed even more massively in the future. This was acknowledged by Kiai Zakki, who stated:

*"We are currently making efforts to digitize our products on a larger scale because so far we have still relied on direct sales through Jamaah Taklim, distribution to stores and coffee shops." (Interview, 20/10/2021)*

Product digitization is a must-do for business players, including pesantrens that run the concept of pesantrenpreneur through the OPOP program. Responding to the high demand for coffee, Kiai Zakki established a coffee factory in Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri 2 in Tulungagung Regency, with a land area of 650 hectares. The company started operating in January 2019 and can produce 15 tons of coffee daily, with revenue of more than 1 billion every month. The santri who study entrepreneurship also benefit from this, as they can attend school and learn about religion for free and receive a monthly salary.

The achievements of Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri in developing its coffee business and exporting its products to various countries can serve as a reference for other pesantrens, especially in East Java, to initiate and advance the One Pesantren One Product (OPOP) program.

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

Since implementing the One Pesantren One Product (OPOP) program in 2018 in West Java, followed by East Java a year later, Al-Ittifaq in West Java and Mukmin Mandiri in East Java have become exemplary models for other Islamic boarding schools. Both pesantrens have successfully realized products processed by their students and assisted by surrounding communities, competing in national and international markets. Moreover, they have produced their products up to tens of tons per day with revenue exceeding IDR 1 billion per month.

The success of both Islamic boarding schools is due to the hard work involving many parties. For example, Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School in West Java has farmers, alumni, and active students as the front guards of the success of businesses in agribusiness under the auspices of Kopontren Al-Ittifaq. In addition, Kopontren Al-Ittifaq's cooperation with several institutions, such as Bank Indonesia, JICA Japan, and PUM Netherlands, has also positively impacted assistance for further development and the sustainability of the OPOP program.

However, Kopontren Al-Ittifaq has encountered several challenges in the process. Islamic boarding schools that run agribusiness, with their superior products of fresh vegetables and fruits, are often faced with pest

attacks and extreme weather conditions that result in crop failures. This was admitted by Gus Irawan, the CEO of Kopontren Al-Ittifaq, saying,

*"There are always obstacles and challenges, especially since we work in the agricultural sector. Pest attacks or weather factors certainly impact the products we grow. In the worst conditions, such as crop failures or harvesting with less-than-optimal results, we have experienced and gone through them."*  
(Interview, 02/09/2021)

Nevertheless, this issue can be minimized over time and with good mentoring to all elements, primarily supported farmers under the auspices of Kopontren Al-Ittifaq. Similarly, Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School in East Java has also made a significant achievement with its world-renowned coffee business. One of the coffee products processed by the students and becoming the top product of the OPOP program is Mahkota Raja Coffee. This product has been exported to several countries, including Australia, Malaysia, China, and Dubai.

Mukmin Mandiri, Islamic Boarding School's outstanding achievement is mainly supported by the efforts and hard work of the students, alumni, and other parties involved. At the beginning of the coffee business journey, the pesantren encountered various obstacles, especially regarding the

availability of equipment, such as coffee peeling, grinding, and roasting machines. This challenge was acknowledged by Kiai Zakki, the founder and caregiver of Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School, saying,

*"In the past, the students had to go to the nearest coffee processing location after harvesting the previously planted coffee seeds. So, they (students) often went back and forth from the Islamic boarding school to the nearest processing location"* (Interview, 20/10/2021).

However, in 2019, the problem was solved as Kiai Zakki built a complete coffee factory in Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri 2 in Tulungagung Regency. The COVID-19 pandemic shook the world economy and affected Indonesia posing a particular challenge for Al-Ittifaq and Mukmin Mandiri in realizing the OPOP program. However, both pesantrens implemented various strategies to overcome the challenges.

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

At the beginning of the One Pesantren One Product (OPOP) program in 2018 in West Java, a year later the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread throughout the country. This posed a particular challenge for pesantren in their efforts to realize

the OPOP program, as experienced by the Al-Ittifaq in West Java and the Mukmin Mandiri in East Java.

However, both Islamic boarding schools applied various strategies and made various efforts to optimize the OPOP program. The strategies implemented were quite diverse, ranging from changing the concept of product sales that were market-oriented to digitalizing products. Kopontren Al-Ittifaq, for example, made a breakthrough by building the Alifmart store. In addition to selling all the needs of the santri, this store also sells fresh vegetables and fruits harvested from the surrounding community of the Islamic boarding school.

Kopontren Al-Ittifaq also developed an online shopping application to reach a broader market, hoping all Indonesians could buy agricultural products from Alifmart via mobile phones. This digital version of the Alifmart store can be accessed at <https://alifmart.online> or downloaded from Google Play Store or App Store. Moreover, the shipping and payment methods provided are diverse and have many options to optimize the sales of Kopontren Al-Ittifaq's agricultural products in the digital era.

Meanwhile, Mukmin Mandiri collaborated with a well-known Indonesian artist, Ayu Azhari, as the brand ambassador for its coffee products. Through direct marketing strategies at UMKM product exhibitions and OPOP programs, Ayu Azhari promoted the pesantren's coffee products and

several times offered them to her 138 thousand followers on Instagram.

Kiai Zakki, the founder and caretaker of the Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School, also markets the students' processed coffee products on one e-commerce platform, Bukalapak. Through various efforts to optimize the sales of these products, the market interest in the boarding school's coffee products has experienced a significant increase. The adaptive attitude that Mukmin Mandiri took in the digital era and during the pandemic successfully maintains the pesantren's economic resilience.

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

Through a study on the implementation, challenges, and strategies carried out by Al-Ittifaq and Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding Schools in realizing One Pesantren One Product (OPOP)-based pesantrenpreneur, several ideal models might be formulated as a prototype for other Islamic boarding schools. They might optimize their potential or products to be competitive and have high selling value. Some of the ideals include:

- a. Pesantren should have quality products that meet the market demand. In maximizing quality flagship products, pesantrens must map through market segmentation. This is to ensure that all products produced can be sold optimally. In practice, Islamic boarding schools can map products based on their quality to

be distributed to targeted marketplaces. Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School in West Java did this. Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School Cooperative (Kopontren) distributes its fresh vegetable and fruit agricultural products to various market segments, such as grade A products being distributed to institutions/companies and malls, grade B products marketed in supermarkets and modern markets, while grade C products are sold in traditional markets. Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School in East Java also does similar things, where products of excellent quality are exported to several countries outside of Indonesia, and products of good quality are distributed to study groups, cafes, and coffee shops. In contrast, products with decent quality are marketed in small-scale coffee shops.

b. Pesantrens should have an official business entity managed professionally to ensure business accountability. To maintain sustainability and ensure accountability of the managed business, pesantrens must have a legal umbrella for the services or products provided or offered under a Limited Liability Company (PT), Commanditaire Venootschap (CV), Trading Unit (UD), or Cooperatives. Most professional companies have a sufficiently good accountability system related to revenue production or cost control. For example, the Al-Ittifaq Islamic

Boarding School Cooperative (Kopontren) stands legally with a deed of establishment on June 6, 1997, Number: 219BHKWK.10VI1997. In addition, Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School also has an official legal entity for the coffee business operated under PT. Berkah Mukmin Mandiri through Notary Act Sugeng Prijadi, SH, MKn. Number: 24, dated August 31, 2015.

c. Pesantren should have strong networks with strategic partners to support business sustainability. In order to expand their business, pesantrens need to collaborate with partners related to their superior products. For example, pesantrens engaged in animal husbandry must 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. Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittifaq undertakes this process in West Java, where Kopontren Al-Ittifaq collaborates with residents to be guided as foster farmers in the production process of fresh vegetables and fruits in the area around the pesantren. In addition, Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri has also made remarkable breakthroughs by partnering with a famous Indonesian artist as a brand ambassador to promote its coffee business.

d. Pesantren have creative and innovative steps in business

- management, products, and marketing so that their superior products can compete in the broader market. Today's unstoppable development trend has caused shifts in all aspects and fields, including the business world. Product digitalization is essential for entrepreneurs, including those involved in pesantren businesses. Therefore, pesantrens must be adaptive and responsive to distribute their products to a broader market at both national and international levels. For example, Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittifaq in West Java has innovated by creating the Alifmart online shopping application, which can be accessed on the website <https://alifmart.online> or downloaded on Google Play Store or App Store. In addition, Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri in East Java has also undertaken the same step, i.e., marketing its coffee products on the Bukalapak e-commerce platform. This is done to ease the consumers from all regions to buy the processed products from both pesantrens through applications or e-commerce installed on their mobile phones.
- e. Pesantren should consistently apply sharia principles to ensure product *halal*-ness and the application of Islamic values in the business process. In running a business, pesantren must implement sharia principles to ensure the products' *halal*ness and internalize Islamic values in the business process. In the process, pesantren can collaborate with the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) to ensure the *halal*ness of the marketed products. They can also apply the principle of honesty in selling the pesantren's processed products. For example, Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittifaq in West Java and Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri in East Java have ensured that every product sold is certified *halal* by the Indonesian Ulama Council. In addition, both pesantren have instilled Islamic values in running their business. Kopontren Al-Ittifaq applies *Ta'awun* (helping each other) as a principle of cooperation and synergy with various parties and implements *Syura* (cooperation) or deliberation regarding ideas and participation of all elements, by fostering farmers, with the aim of empowerment.
  - f. Meanwhile, Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri, through the *Ngaji Sogeh* (praying for wealth or to be wealthy) forum, teaches its congregation the basic principles of entrepreneurship and the application of Islamic values in the process. This pesantren also gives Islamic-themed names to some of its products, such as Kopi Tjap Kiaiku. Moreover, an Islamic-themed tagline is also embedded in the Mahkota Raja coffee product, e.g., Robusta Arabica Blend Doa, Coffee + Milk + Sugar + Prayer (4 in 1).

## CONCLUSION

Over approximately three years, the local governments of West Java and East Java, through the One

Pesantren One Product (OPOP) program, have sought to enhance the economic resilience of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) during the current Covid-19 pandemic. Although in practice, many pesantren under the OPOP program are still striving to achieve financial independence by optimizing the potential of their surrounding areas to produce standout products, some pesantren are deemed to have successfully overcome this phase. Two of these pesantren are the Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School in West Java, which produces fresh vegetables and fruits from its farming, and the Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School in East Java produces its flagship product, coffee from its own plantation.

Both pesantren apply "from upstream to downstream," where all processes from planting, harvesting, packaging to selling are done independently. Looking closer, the Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School empowers 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 is then distributed to consumers based on market segmentation determined through the Alifmart Store, both offline and online. In line with what has been done by Kopontren Al-Ittifaq, the Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School carries out the process of planting coffee beans, harvesting, grinding, packaging, and marketing independently. The processed coffee product from the

pesantren's students and alumni is then sold based on predetermined market segmentation, both domestically and internationally.

However, it does not mean that the development process of these pesantren's businesses does not encounter any obstacles and challenges. For example, the Al-Ittifaq Islamic Boarding School in West Java often faces pest attacks on its agricultural produce, resulting in crop failures. In addition, weather factors also significantly affect the growth of their produce. Likewise, the Mukmin Mandiri Islamic Boarding School in East Java faces similar challenges. This is due to both pesantren's flagship products falling within the same field, namely agribusiness. Moreover, technical difficulties related to providing coffee grinding equipment have also been experienced, resulting in students frequently leaving and entering the pesantren to grind their harvested coffee.

Both Islamic boarding schools have made improvements in various fields to respond to these challenges and obstacles. It includes learning more effective planting and harvesting cycles, finding ways to deal with pest attacks, and providing training to those involved, including students and alumni in both boarding schools and sponsored farmers under the Kopontren Al-Ittifaq program. Additionally, 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.

Moreover, both boarding schools have collaborated with strategic partners to optimize product sales through the OPOP program. For instance, Kopontren Al-Ittifaq has partnered with Bank Indonesia, JICA Japan, and PUM Netherlands. The boarding school received guidance and mentoring in this cooperation to scale up the ongoing business. Meanwhile, Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri has collaborated with government agencies and coffee export communities to sell its coffee products domestically and abroad. Additionally, both boarding schools have digitized their products, marketing their respective superior products through the Alifmart online shopping application explicitly created by and for Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittifaq and selling products through the Bukalapak e-commerce platform, as done by Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri.

The success stories of Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittifaq in West Java and Pondok Pesantren Mukmin Mandiri in East Java are very inspiring for other OPOP program-sponsored boarding schools to continue striving to realize their potential to develop into high-competitive flagship products. In practice, the best ways to be replicated and adapted to the conditions of other boarding schools include: 1) Maximizing the potential in the boarding school area to produce high-quality flagship products with appropriate market segmentation. 2) Having a legally registered business entity that is professionally managed. 3) Collaborating with appropriate and relevant strategic partners in the business area or type of business pursued. 4) Creating various creations and innovations, including managerial, product, and marketing. 5) Upholding Islamic values and adhering to Sharia principles, ensuring the halalness of products and conducting business.

#### **Author's 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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We declare that we have no conflict of interest

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