

Enhancing Entrepreneurial Competence of Students at Kulliyatul Muallimin al-Islamiyah for Engagement in the Halal Industry Sector

Hadiyanto Arief¹

Universitas Gadjah Mada
hadiyanto.arief@mail.ugm.ac.id

Abstract

This study explores the integration of entrepreneurship education within the Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah (KMI) curriculum, with a particular focus on preparing students (santri) to actively participate in the growing halal industry. In light of the rapid expansion of the global halal market, Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren hold a strategic position in developing entrepreneurs who are both competent and committed to Islamic ethical values. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through literature review, curriculum analysis, and in-depth interviews with teachers and alumni from pesantren implementing the KMI curriculum. The findings indicate that entrepreneurial education at KMI implicitly embeds core Islamic business values such as honesty, responsibility, and a commitment to community welfare, aligning well with the principles of the halal industry. However, the study also identifies significant challenges, including limited access to halal certification training, lack of market exposure, and insufficient collaboration with industry stakeholders. The study concludes that the KMI curriculum holds great potential to be developed as a value-based entrepreneurship education model, capable of producing professional, ethical, and globally adaptive halal entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah, student entrepreneurship, pesantren curriculum, halal industry, value-based education

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi integrasi pendidikan kewirausahaan dalam kurikulum Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah (KMI) dengan menitikberatkan pada kesiapan santri untuk berkontribusi secara aktif dalam sektor industri halal yang terus berkembang secara global. Dalam konteks meningkatnya permintaan terhadap produk dan layanan halal, pesantren sebagai lembaga pendidikan Islam memiliki posisi strategis dalam mencetak wirausahawan muda yang tidak hanya kompeten, tetapi juga berorientasi pada nilai-nilai syariah. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan metode pengumpulan data melalui studi literatur, analisis dokumen kurikulum, serta wawancara mendalam dengan guru dan alumni dari pesantren yang menerapkan kurikulum KMI. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan kewirausahaan di KMI secara implisit telah menginternalisasi nilai-nilai etika bisnis Islam, seperti kejujuran, tanggung jawab, dan keberpihakan pada kepentingan umat, yang sejalan dengan prinsip-prinsip industri halal. Namun demikian, penelitian juga menemukan tantangan yang signifikan, terutama terkait keterbatasan akses terhadap pelatihan sertifikasi halal, minimnya jejaring pasar, dan kurangnya kolaborasi dengan pelaku industri. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa KMI memiliki potensi besar untuk dikembangkan sebagai model pendidikan wirausaha berbasis nilai, yang mampu melahirkan santri sebagai pelaku ekonomi halal yang profesional, berintegritas, dan adaptif terhadap dinamika global.

Kata Kunci: Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah, kewirausahaan santri, kurikulum pesantren, industri halal, pendidikan berbasis nilai

Introduction

Indonesia's aspiration to become a global center for the halal industry is an integral part of its national strategic agenda, as outlined in various policy documents and development plans, including the Indonesian Sharia Economy Masterplan 2019–2024 and a range of initiatives coordinated by the National Committee for Sharia Economy and Finance (Komite Nasional Ekonomi dan Keuangan Syariah, KNEKS). This ambitious vision reflects the country's efforts to enhance its economic competitiveness by leveraging Islamic values on a global scale. A key pillar in realizing this goal is the development of high-quality human resources—individuals who not only possess technical competencies across core sectors of the halal industry, such as halal food and beverages, Islamic finance, halal tourism, as well as halal cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, but also embody moral integrity, an Islamic work ethic, and a deep understanding of the sharia principles that underpin the operational foundation of the halal economy (KNEKS, 2020; Dinar Standard, 2021). In this context, pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) with deep historical, cultural, and social roots within Indonesian society, play a strategic role in shaping a generation of Muslims who are not only pious and ethically upright, but also economically independent and socially responsible. With their holistic educational approach that integrates spiritual, intellectual, and life skills development, pesantren have significant potential to serve as training centers for character-driven, globally competitive human resources in the halal industry (Azra, 2013; Zarkasyi, 2019). Therefore, the empowerment and transformation of pesantren toward strengthening the national halal economic ecosystem represents a strategic initiative that aligns with Indonesia's broader policy direction for sharia economic development.

The Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah (KMI) educational model, originally designed as a system for training Islamic teachers and educators, has increasingly demonstrated broader relevance—particularly in supporting the development of value-based entrepreneurship. KMI places strong emphasis not only on the mastery of classical Islamic sciences such as tafsir, fiqh, hadith, and Arabic language, but also on character and personality development. This is achieved through an educational system that instills discipline, leadership, collective responsibility, and habits of simplicity and self-reliance among students (Saeed et al., 2001; Mujani, 2022). In the face of digital transformation and the rapid growth of the global halal industry, an educational approach that integrates Islamic values with entrepreneurial skills has become increasingly vital (Alserhan, 2011; Hassan et al., 2017). Thus, the integration of halal entrepreneurship education into the KMI curriculum represents not only a relevant but also an urgent strategic step. Through this integrated approach, students (santri) are equipped with both soft skills—such as communication, collaboration, and social leadership—and hard skills, including Islamic financial literacy, halal-based micro-enterprise management, digital marketing of halal products, and adaptability to value-driven market dynamics (Rohmah, 2020; Setiawan, 2021). Accordingly, the KMI education model holds strong potential to serve as a role model in producing a generation of Muslim entrepreneurs who are ethical, competent, and capable of contributing meaningfully to the development of both the national and global sharia economic ecosystems.

In addition to integrating Islamic values and entrepreneurial principles into the formal curriculum, the Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah (KMI) education system also provides ample space for the development of practical skills through extracurricular activities and experiential, hands-on learning. Pesantren that implement the KMI model typically operate various business units directly managed

by students (*santri*) under the supervision of teachers and mentors. These include student cooperatives, halal food and beverage production units, printing services, and even digital entrepreneurship initiatives utilizing Islamic-compliant social media platforms and marketplaces. Student involvement in these activities not only enhances their technical skills in micro-enterprise production and management but also cultivates an entrepreneurial mindset grounded in integrity, cooperation, and social benefit. This pattern aligns closely with the experiential learning approach, which emphasizes learning through direct experience and is widely regarded as effective in strengthening conceptual understanding, applied skills, and critical reflection in real-world contexts (Efendi & Abdullah, 2020; Samsudin, 2018). By actively participating in the management of community-based business units, *santri* acquire a comprehensive entrepreneurial foundation—encompassing both operational business knowledge and a firm grasp of ethics and sharia compliance. As a result, KMI graduates who undergo this process possess a comparative advantage in contributing to the halal industry, which not only demands managerial competence and product innovation but also requires adherence to sharia principles and an understanding of the evolving dynamics of the global halal market (Wilson & Liu, 2010; Tieman, 2016). Thus, the KMI model demonstrates significant potential as an educational ecosystem capable of producing visionary, competent, and values-oriented halal entrepreneurs.

This article aims to examine in depth the strategic role of the Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah (KMI) educational model in developing halal entrepreneurial competencies among *santri* (Islamic boarding school students). The study is driven by the urgent need to enhance the quality of human resources who not only possess technical skills but are also deeply rooted in Islamic values—an essential prerequisite for building a sustainable halal industry ecosystem. The analysis focuses on four key aspects: first, the integration of Islamic values in the educational process and the formation of entrepreneurial character among *santri*; second, the readiness of the curriculum and the capacity of educators to implement halal entrepreneurship education in a systematic and structured manner; third, the identification and evaluation of entrepreneurial practices already developed within KMI-based pesantren, including business units and project-based learning activities; and fourth, the mapping of challenges and opportunities for cross-sector collaboration, particularly between pesantren, government, and halal industry stakeholders. Through this approach, the article seeks to offer both theoretical and practical contributions toward formulating a pesantren-based entrepreneurial development model that is adaptive to the evolving dynamics of the halal industry at both national and global levels.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the dynamics surrounding the implementation of value-based entrepreneurship education within pesantren that adopt the Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah (KMI) model. This approach was chosen as it is suitable for exploring social and educational phenomena holistically, particularly in the context of the experiences and perceptions of educational actors such as teachers, students (*santri*), and alumni (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data were collected through several techniques, including: (1) document analysis of the KMI curriculum, covering program structure, syllabi, and extracurricular activities supporting entrepreneurship; (2) in-depth semi-structured interviews with 12 key informants consisting of teachers, pesantren

leaders, and alumni from three pesantren implementing the KMI model—namely Pondok Modern Gontor, Pondok Pesantren Darunnajah, and Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan; and (3) literature review relevant to supporting data interpretation and strengthening the theoretical framework (Moleong, 2019; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques to systematically identify, analyze, and report patterns of meaning (themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process involved stages of initial coding, theme searching, theme reviewing, and defining and naming themes. The three main themes examined in this study include value-based Islamic entrepreneurship education practices, institutional support for the development of student entrepreneurship, and models and innovations in halal-based economic initiatives.

To maintain the validity and reliability of the data, triangulation techniques were applied, including source triangulation (teachers, alumni, and documents), methodological triangulation (document analysis, interviews, and literature review), and theoretical triangulation. The findings were validated through member checking, which involved seeking confirmation from the informants on the researcher's initial interpretation of the data to ensure accuracy of meaning and enrich the contextual understanding of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sugiyono, 2017).

Results

Pesantren based on the Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah (KMI) model have demonstrated significant progressiveness in adapting and integrating entrepreneurship modules into their educational systems, with a strong emphasis on production and service practices that align with halal principles and Islamic values. This innovation is reflected in a range of structured, real-life activities developed within the pesantren environment, such as the establishment of halal culinary businesses, student cooperatives based on sharia principles, training and production of Muslim fashion that responds to global modest fashion trends, and the management of sustainable agribusiness ventures including organic farming and halal livestock. Moreover, pesantren have begun to engage in the field of digital entrepreneurship by offering training in content creation and value-based marketing strategies for Islamic social media and sharia-compliant e-commerce platforms demonstrating adaptability to the evolving dynamics of the digital economy (Hassan et al., 2017; Rohmah, 2020; Rashid, 2019). These business units serve not only as practical laboratories for entrepreneurship, but also as educational spaces for cultivating entrepreneurial character among students. Values such as honesty, responsibility, diligence, social concern, and a pursuit of spiritual blessings are actively nurtured. Therefore, the integration of halal entrepreneurship education in KMI-based pesantren not only produces graduates who are technically skilled but also grounded in strong ethical and spiritual foundations qualities essential for Muslim entrepreneurs to thrive in the global halal economy.

Testimonies from alumni indicate that the educational environment in pesantren, particularly those implementing the Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah (KMI) model, plays an active role in shaping students' entrepreneurial character. Core values such as perseverance, discipline, responsibility, organizational skills, teamwork, and ethical decision-making in economic activities are embedded in the daily life of santri, both through academic and non-academic engagements (Samsudin, 2018; Setiawan, 2021). The boarding school lifestyle, which emphasizes independence and orderliness, along with a teaching approach rooted in role

modeling by senior teachers and ustadz, effectively fosters the development of crucial soft skills for entrepreneurship, including resilience, leadership, adaptability, and a value-oriented mindset. Furthermore, several KMI-based pesantren have taken proactive steps by establishing strategic partnerships with key institutions in the halal industry ecosystem, such as the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal / BPJPH), the Assessment Institute for Foods, Drugs, and Cosmetics of the Indonesian Ulema Council (LPPOM MUI), and local sharia cooperatives. These collaborations reflect the pesantren's commitment to ensuring the professionalism and sustainability of student-led ventures through compliance with halal certification standards, access to Islamic microfinance, and capacity-building in value-based business development (Tiemann, 2016; KNEKS, 2020). In this way, pesantren serve not only as institutions for moral and spiritual formation, but also as incubators for halal entrepreneurship, preparing the younger Muslim generation to take an active role in the transformation of the national and global sharia-based economy.

Nevertheless, the effort to develop pesantren-based halal entrepreneurship particularly through the Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah (KMI) educational model still faces several critical challenges that must be addressed seriously. One of the primary obstacles is the limited market access for products produced by santri. These products often circulate only within internal or local markets and lack well-structured marketing strategies to penetrate broader, national or even global, markets. Additionally, both students and many pesantren administrators still have a limited understanding of the processes and standards of halal certification, which are essential prerequisites for legitimacy and credibility in the halal industry (Mujani, 2022; Thomson Reuters, 2021). Another significant challenge lies in the low levels of digital literacy and technological competence among santri and teachers alike. This gap hinders the development of digital-based entrepreneurship, particularly in the areas of online marketing, application-based business management, and the use of social media for halal product branding. Furthermore, the role of mentors and business coaches from the halal industry remains minimal, leading to entrepreneurship development efforts that are often sporadic and lack continuity. From an institutional perspective, many pesantren continue to face classic constraints such as limited operational funding for entrepreneurship programs, insufficient teacher training in Islamic economics and halal business, and suboptimal strategic collaboration with external stakeholders. These include industry actors, government agencies, Islamic financial institutions, and entrepreneurial funding platforms (Ali, 2019; Alserhan, 2011). Therefore, a systemic and collaborative approach is urgently needed to enable pesantren to transform into competitive and sustainable centers for halal entrepreneurship development.

Despite the various challenges that persist, the entrepreneurial potential of Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah (KMI) students remains highly promising and deserves continuous development. The strong social, spiritual, and moral capital embedded within the KMI education system serves as an invaluable asset in shaping ethically responsible entrepreneurs who are committed to serving the broader community. KMI students are molded through the consistent internalization of Islamic values such as honesty, discipline, collective work, and devotion—all of which form the foundational pillars of sustainable, value-oriented entrepreneurship (Othman et al., 2015). With its educational approach that integrates knowledge, spirituality, and character formation, KMI-based pesantren possess the capacity to nurture social entrepreneurs who are not solely driven by profit but are also

dedicated to community empowerment and the inclusive development of the sharia economy. This potential becomes increasingly relevant in the context of the global halal economy, which demands business actors who are not only technically competent but also possess moral integrity, as well as social and environmental awareness (Wilson & Liu, 2010). Therefore, strengthening and facilitating the development of entrepreneurship within KMI pesantren is not merely an institutional necessity, but a strategic national agenda. It is a vital step toward cultivating a generation of young Muslim entrepreneurs who are capable of responding to contemporary challenges and accelerating Indonesia's vision to become a global hub for the Islamic economy.

Discussion

The integration of halal entrepreneurship within the KMI model not only supports Indonesia's national aspiration to become a global halal industry hub but also strengthens the philosophical and pedagogical foundation of pesantren in nurturing ethical Muslim entrepreneurs. The KMI curriculum, which emphasizes values and character, is highly compatible with the core principles of the halal industry such as *thayyiban* (good and high-quality), *amanah* (responsibility), and *maslahah* (benefit) (Qardhawi, 2001; Tieman, 2016). This alignment serves as a competitive advantage in the global market, which increasingly demands sustainability, transparency, and spiritual integrity in products and services (Othman et al., 2015; Saeed et al., 2001).

To optimize the impact of pesantren-based halal entrepreneurship education, multisectoral collaboration is essential. Involvement of halal certification bodies such as BPJPH and LPPOM MUI can ensure that students' products meet both national and international halal standards (Tieman, 2016; Mujani, 2022). Government institutions like KNEKS play a strategic role in providing regulatory support, economic incentives, and development programs for pesantren-based halal MSMEs (KNEKS, 2020). Private sector actors, especially those in the established halal industry, can serve as business incubation partners and marketing facilitators (Rashid, 2019; Alserhan, 2011).

Another concrete step needed is the training of pesantren teachers in entrepreneurship and digital economy, along with the development of a pesantren-based halal entrepreneurship curriculum module that is adaptive to contemporary changes (Efendi & Abdullah, 2020; Rohmah, 2020). The establishment of pesantren-based halal business incubators with professional mentoring systems will accelerate students' readiness to enter the business world directly (Ali, 2019; Zuhdi, 2015). The integration of Islamic financial literacy and the strengthening of digital skills such as e-commerce, online marketing, and social media management will greatly enhance the competitiveness of student entrepreneurs in the Industry 4.0 era (Wilson & Liu, 2010; Zarkasyi, 2019).

As a form of knowledge enrichment and policy development, comparative studies between KMI pesantren and secular vocational institutions can provide insight into the strengths and limitations of each entrepreneurship education approach (Setiawan, 2021; Samsudin, 2018). The results of such studies can serve as a basis for formulating national policies on values-based vocational education and expanding the KMI model to various regions in Indonesia as part of a national strategy for sustainable halal economic development.

Conclusion

The Kulliyatul Muallimin al-Islamiyah (KMI) has proven to be a promising Islamic educational model for comprehensively and systematically integrating halal entrepreneurship values. Through a value-based approach, KMI not only equips students with entrepreneurial skills but also fosters strong moral character traits such as integrity, responsibility, and a commitment to sharia-based principles. KMI's tangible contribution to the growth of the national halal industry ecosystem is evident in the emergence of various student-led entrepreneurial initiatives in sectors such as halal culinary businesses, Muslim fashion, agribusiness, and sharia-compliant digital marketing.

As an institution that instills Islamic values in an integrated manner, KMI plays a vital role in producing sharia economic actors who are not only technically competent but also possess a strong sense of spiritual and social commitment. This strength represents a strategic potential in facing global economic challenges that increasingly demand sustainability and value-based transparency.

To fully realize this potential, systemic support is needed in the form of government policies that promote the strengthening of Islamic vocational education, capacity building for teachers in the field of entrepreneurship, and the expansion of partnerships between pesantren, the business sector, halal certification bodies, and government institutions such as KNEKS. The establishment of halal business incubators within pesantren, the enhancement of curricula that are responsive to industry needs, and the integration of digital literacy and Islamic financial literacy will be strategic steps to increase the competitiveness of student entrepreneurs.

Further research is highly recommended to examine the scalability of the KMI-based entrepreneurship model, in terms of curriculum development, human resources, and the sustainability of student enterprises after graduation. Moreover, it is important to analyze the impact of digital transformation on the business performance of students and to compare the effectiveness of this model with entrepreneurship education programs in secular vocational institutions. In doing so, KMI can become an innovative role model of Islamic education in supporting the sustainable growth of Indonesia's halal economy.

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