



The Social Economy Model Based on Pesantren Communities in the Post-Truth Era

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Abstract : The rise of the post-truth era—marked by the prioritization of emotions over facts and the widespread manipulation of information—has challenged the sustainability and credibility of conventional socio-economic models. In contrast, pesantren communities in Indonesia have preserved a unique social economy rooted in Islamic values, communal trust, and productive religiosity. This study investigates the structural and functional characteristics of the social economy practiced by pesantren communities and how these values serve as a resilient framework amid post-truth dynamics. Using a qualitative case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participatory observations in five pesantren-based business units across East Java. The analysis reveals that pesantren communities build their economic activities on the principles of collective welfare (*maslahah*), transparency (*amanah*), and intergenerational trust. These elements shape a distinctive ecosystem that integrates religious authority, social capital, and economic inclusiveness. The findings confirm that the pesantren-based social economy not only offers an alternative to mainstream capitalist models but also provides a robust foundation for resisting the socio-economic disintegration caused by post-truth narratives. This model strengthens local resilience, promotes ethical entrepreneurship, and fosters economic justice in marginalized societies.

Keywords: Pesantren economy, post-truth, social capital, Islamic entrepreneurship, community-based model, economic justice



INTRODUCTION

In the age of digital overexposure and fragmented information, the post-truth era has emerged as a defining characteristic of contemporary society. According to a report by the Oxford Dictionaries (2016), the term "post-truth" was named the Word of the Year, signaling a shift where emotional appeal and personal belief increasingly supersede objective facts in shaping public opinion. This condition has serious implications not only for political communication and media ethics, but also for social trust, economic behavior (Irawan, 2024a), and institutional credibility. Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country with over 600,000 pesantren institutions impacting more than 20 million lives directly or indirectly (Kemenag RI, 2023), presents a unique context where traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) continue to function as resilient socio-economic units rooted in religious authority and communal values. Amid rising misinformation, consumerist values, and socio-economic alienation, the pesantren economy offers an untapped yet critical model of integrity, interdependence, and faith-driven sustainability.

Despite the growing interest in Islamic economics and community-based development, little scholarly attention has been paid to pesantren as autonomous social economy actors in navigating post-truth disruptions. Most existing research focuses on pesantren's religious or educational functions (Azra, 2012; Hefner, 2020), while overlooking their embedded economic practices such as cooperative enterprises, halal production, labor training, and waqf-based systems. Studies that touch on Islamic social economy (Kahf, 2003; Ascarya, 2019) often generalize the model without contextually analyzing pesantren's institutional roles as self-reliant socio-economic entities. This creates a clear gap in literature that requires urgent academic attention. Moreover, (Irawan & Wahyudhi, 2023) the intersection between post-truth dynamics and pesantren-based economic ethics remains unexplored, rendering this study the first of its kind to bridge Islamic communal resilience with contemporary epistemic crises.

This study explores the structure, values, and operational logic of pesantren-based social economy models, particularly in their role as agents of ethical production, inclusive growth, and cultural resistance in the post-truth era. By integrating qualitative case studies and grounded theory methodology, this research examines how pesantren institutions engage in economic initiatives while preserving Islamic social ethics (ukhuwah, amanah, maslahah), and how these models contrast with and potentially challenge neoliberal market paradigms. It also investigates the mechanisms by which



pesantren communities counteract post-truth vulnerabilities such as digital disinformation, individualism, and economic alienation through faith-based collaboration and trust networks.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic social economy frameworks by grounding them in lived community practices rather than abstract legal doctrines. It introduces a new lens for understanding pesantren not merely as religious-educational institutions, but as micro-societies with integrated spiritual, economic, and moral systems. In practice, the findings may inform policymakers, Islamic microfinance institutions, and community organizers about replicable models of ethical entrepreneurship and collective resilience. This research aligns with global calls for sustainable development rooted in local wisdom and ethical governance (UNDP, 2022), offering a culturally contextualized alternative to capital-driven development strategies.

The uniqueness of this study lies in its original empirical focus on pesantren as holistic social economy actors in response to post-truth challenges. While previous works have examined either pesantren education or Islamic economic ethics separately, none has integrated the socio-economic dimension of pesantren life as a cohesive model of resistance, renewal, and relevance in today's volatile information and economic landscape. By doing so, this research does not only fill a critical academic gap but also revives indigenous Islamic institutional roles as vital contributors to both economic justice and social coherence in the digital age.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to deeply explore the social economy model embedded within pesantren communities in Indonesia, particularly in response to the epistemological disruptions of the post-truth era. The qualitative method is chosen due to its strength in capturing context-specific, value-laden, and institutionally embedded realities that cannot be quantified through surveys alone (Creswell, 2014). Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis across five pesantren-based economic units in East Java that actively run cooperatives, halal production, and educational entrepreneurship. (Irawan, Putro, Sifa, & ..., 2023) A total of 25 informants were purposefully selected, including kyai, pesantren administrators, economic managers, and community members. Interviews were semi-structured to allow the emergence of



grounded narratives and were recorded, transcribed. The triangulation of multiple data sources and the prolonged engagement in field settings enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure replicability, detailed documentation of sampling criteria, interview protocols, and coding schemes is maintained for transparency. The analytical lens adopted in this study is Social Capital Theory, particularly drawing from Putnam's framework (2000), which emphasizes norms of reciprocity, trust, and networks of civic engagement. This theoretical framework is appropriate because pesantren function as tight-knit communities whose economic activities are deeply interwoven with religious trust, social cohesion, and communal obligations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results: The Social Economy Model Based on Pesantren Communities in the Post-Truth Era

1. Dominance of Religious-Based Economic Motivation

Religious-based economic motivation has emerged as a dominant factor in shaping the economic behavior of individuals and communities, particularly within societies where religion permeates not only personal belief systems but also collective socio-economic frameworks. In Islamic economic thought, for instance, religious values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *barakah* (blessing), *halal* (lawful), and *maslahah* (public interest) are not peripheral—they are central tenets that guide both consumption and production behavior. (Irawan, 2024b) This dominance is observable in the rapid growth of Islamic finance, halal industries, and zakat-based welfare systems, which underscore how faith-inspired motivation surpasses mere profit-seeking objectives. Rather than maximizing utility in secular terms, adherents of religious economic principles often aim to align their financial practices with divine injunctions and moral accountability.

The most compelling illustration of this trend can be found in the exponential rise of the Islamic finance sector. According to the Islamic Financial Services Board (IFSB, 2023), the global Islamic finance industry exceeded USD 3.06 trillion in total assets by the end of 2022, reflecting a sustained growth rate driven not only by institutional expansion but also by grassroots demand for Shariah-compliant services. Similarly, the halal food market, which stood at USD 1.9 trillion in 2021, continues to grow rapidly, propelled by consumer preference

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for religiously sanctioned products (DinarStandard, 2022). These trends are not confined to Muslim-majority countries; Western economies have also experienced a surge in demand for religiously compliant products, indicating that the economic behavior of religious communities transcends national boundaries and integrates moral imperatives into global commerce.

The dominance of religious-based motivation is also evident in the proliferation of faith-driven entrepreneurship. In Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, numerous *pesantren*-based (Islamic boarding school) cooperatives and microfinance institutions have flourished by fostering a blend of religious education and entrepreneurial empowerment. A study by Habibah and Lubis (2020) highlights how many entrepreneurs in Indonesia initiate businesses not only to gain income but also to fulfill spiritual obligations such as paying zakat and providing employment in accordance with Islamic ethics. These entrepreneurs often frame their business goals within a religious narrative of serving the *ummah* (community), emphasizing social harmony and ethical trade practices over cutthroat competition.

From a theoretical standpoint, the motivation behind religiously informed economic action aligns with the behavioral economics concept of *bounded rationality*—economic decisions are not made purely on rational calculations but are influenced by cultural, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (Kahneman, 2011). Moreover, in contrast to the classical Homo Economicus model that assumes self-interest as the primary driver, religious economics posits the Homo Islamicus model, in which human actions are guided by the pursuit of *falah* (eternal success) rather than material gain (Asutay, 2007). This perspective redefines economic rationality in a way that integrates accountability to God, social welfare, and ethical considerations into every financial transaction.

2. Integration of Waqf and Zakat in Economic Operations

The integration of *waqf* (Islamic endowment) and *zakat* (mandatory almsgiving) into economic operations represents a strategic evolution of Islamic social finance instruments, aiming to bridge social equity with sustainable development. These two pillars of Islamic philanthropy, while traditionally implemented in separate operational silos, are increasingly being harmonized to optimize resource allocation, poverty alleviation, and the stimulation of inclusive economic growth. Rather than functioning merely as charitable tools, the



contemporary approach repositions *waqf* and *zakat* as integral components of a comprehensive Islamic economic system—where the synergy between the two can generate long-term socioeconomic benefits, especially in Muslim-majority nations like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Pakistan.

Empirical data supports this growing trend. Indonesia, for instance, has pioneered a hybrid financing model known as the *integrated zakat-waqf model*, which combines the short-term liquidity of zakat with the long-term asset sustainability of waqf. According to the *Badan Wakaf Indonesia* (BWI, 2023) and *Baznas* (2022), such models have been applied in sectors such as education, healthcare, and micro-enterprise support. One notable example is the *Waqf-based Microfinance Institution (WBMI)* initiative, which uses zakat to fund working capital and waqf to secure operational infrastructure. This fusion ensures that while immediate needs of the poor are addressed through zakat, waqf provides the structural backbone for continuous service provision. A study by Ascarya and Yumanita (2020) found that such integration can improve efficiency by up to 35% in social assistance programs and contributes directly to reducing multidimensional poverty.

Table 1. Integration of Zakat and Waqf in Economic Operations in Indonesia (2022–2024)

Year	Zakat Potential* (IDR)	Zakat Realization (IDR)	Cash Waqf Potential* (IDR)	Cash Waqf/SBSN Realization (IDR)	Impact Indicators & Innovations
2022	327 trillion (annual potential)	Realization likely below 34.2 trillion	180 trillion	~IDR 31.9 billion/year (2011–18 avg.)	Launch of Cash Waqf Linked Sukuk (CWLS) to finance social infrastructure
2023	327 trillion	Realized ~34.2 trillion	180 trillion	Slight increase via CWLS, still <2% of potential (~USD 180 million in 2024)	Growth of digital zakat & waqf donations; zakat and waqf reduce poverty ratio by 0.24% per increase unit



2024	–	–	180 trillion	Realization remains low (~1.5% of potential ≈ USD 180 million)	CAF: Indonesia ranked most generous country globally in 2024; key challenges: governance, literacy, trustee capacity
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Source: Bank Indonesia 2022-2024

Since 2022 Indonesia’s zakat and cash waqf potentials have been remarkably high—estimated at IDR 327 trillion and IDR 180 trillion annually, respectively—yet actual collections remain modest, with zakat realization at only IDR 34.2 trillion in 2023 and cash waqf utilization below 1.5% by 2024 (Baznas, 2023; CAF, 2024). The introduction of Cash Waqf Linked Sukuk (CWLS) in 2022 aimed to bridge this gap by channeling waqf funds into government sukuk to finance social infrastructure (Cahyono & Hidayat, 2022), but public uptake remains limited due to low awareness and trust (Ramli & Yusuf, 2023). Despite this, studies indicate that even small increases in zakat and waqf utilization can reduce poverty by 0.24% per unit, especially when supported by digital innovations that boost transparency and engagement (Wahyudi et al., 2025; BI, 2022). Nonetheless, governance weaknesses, financial illiteracy, and service centralization in urban areas remain key barriers to broader integration (ScienceDirect, 2025; RDI Global, 2023).

The integration of waqf and zakat is aligned with the maqasid al-shariah (objectives of Islamic law), particularly the goals of preserving wealth (*hifz al-mal*), dignity (*hifz al-‘ird*), and life (*hifz al-nafs*). Through this lens, zakat addresses immediate consumption needs, while waqf enables production and infrastructure investment—thus completing the economic cycle from relief to empowerment. From a policy perspective, several Islamic scholars and development economists argue that this integrated model provides a more sustainable and systemic response to poverty than conventional welfare programs (Obaidullah & Shirazi, 2015).

Integrating waqf and zakat operations introduces new innovations in Islamic financial products and services. For example, the concept of *Cash Waqf Linked Sukuk (CWLS)* has been introduced in Indonesia as a government-backed financial instrument that channels cash waqf into state development projects, while zakat complements these efforts by supporting marginalized beneficiaries (Ministry of Finance RI, 2023). This represents a turning point where religious



philanthropy intersects with fiscal and economic planning, thus expanding its role beyond the nonprofit sphere.

The digital transformation of zakat and waqf institutions also accelerates this integration. With platforms such as *Ziswaf Digital* in Indonesia or *Waqf Chain* in the Middle East, the transparency, accountability, and traceability of fund utilization have significantly improved. These platforms allow donors and institutions to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the performance of integrated waqf-zakat projects more effectively, encouraging greater public trust and participation (Kahf, 2018).

3. Community Trust and Social Bonds as Economic Capital

In the realm of socio-economic development, community trust and social bonds function as a form of intangible economic capital, often referred to as social capital, which significantly influences economic productivity, cooperation, and sustainability. Social capital encompasses the networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam, 2000). In communities with high levels of mutual trust, individuals are more likely to engage in collective action, share resources, and support one another's economic endeavors—behaviors that directly affect entrepreneurial success, access to credit, and resilience during crises. This form of capital becomes especially vital in rural or underserved areas where formal institutions are weak or access to financial services is limited.

Empirical studies validate the importance of social capital in enhancing economic outcomes. For example, the World Bank (2023) reports that villages with stronger social cohesion in Indonesia demonstrated greater resilience to economic shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, due to informal safety nets rooted in community trust. In similar findings, research by Rachmawati and Prasetyo (2022) on smallholder farmers in Central Java illustrates how tightly-knit community networks enable cooperative farming, mutual aid, and informal lending—all of which contribute to more stable household incomes. These communal structures reduce transactional uncertainty and lower the cost of coordination, fostering an environment conducive to innovation and entrepreneurship. In Islamic economic philosophy, trust (*amanah*) and solidarity (*ukhuwah*) are not only moral imperatives but also operational values that drive sustainable commerce, especially in microfinance systems like BMTs (Baitul Maal wat Tamwil), where



creditworthiness often hinges on personal character and community standing rather than collateral (Antonio, 2011).

Digital platforms have increasingly leveraged social capital to promote peer-to-peer lending and crowdfunding initiatives. Indonesia's fintech landscape provides clear examples: platforms such as *KoinWorks* and *Amartha* utilize social network data to assess borrower credibility, extending credit to those excluded by traditional banks. This signals a paradigm shift where trust embedded in community relations becomes a quantifiable asset. According to Otoritas Jasa Keuangan (OJK, 2024), over 65% of borrowers in digital microfinance platforms were evaluated based on community-based scoring mechanisms, highlighting the monetization of trust networks. These innovations confirm that economic viability no longer relies solely on material assets but also on relational infrastructures.

The erosion of trust—due to corruption, inequality, or poor governance—can severely diminish the value of social capital. A 2023 study by Transparency International reveals that declining public trust in institutions correlates with lower civic participation and weaker collective economic action. Thus, fostering community trust requires deliberate investment in inclusive governance, transparency, and participatory decision-making. Programs such as Indonesia's *Dana Desa* (Village Fund), which promote village-level accountability and community involvement, are critical in reinforcing social cohesion and converting it into sustainable economic capital (Kemendesa PDTT, 2023).

4. Ethical Leadership of Kyai in Business Governance

The ethical leadership of *kyai*—Islamic scholars and respected religious figures in Indonesia—plays a pivotal role in shaping the values and practices of business governance, particularly within pesantren-based economies and Muslim communities. Unlike conventional business leaders, *kyai* often assume a dual role: as moral authority and as community-based economic actors. Their influence is rooted in spiritual legitimacy, moral consistency, and community trust, making their leadership style uniquely powerful in embedding ethical norms within economic transactions. In pesantren cooperatives, Islamic microfinance institutions (such as BMTs), and even in small-scale entrepreneurial initiatives, the *kyai*'s involvement acts as a compass guiding the enterprise not merely toward profit, but toward justice (*'adl*), trust (*amanah*), and communal benefit (*maslahah*).

Empirical findings support this assertion. A study by Abdurrahman and



Syakur (2023) analyzing pesantren-based BMTs in East Java revealed that the leadership role of kyai not only fosters a culture of ethical compliance, but also significantly enhances member loyalty and financial discipline. These leaders encourage Islamic work ethics such as *ikhlas* (sincerity), *tawakal* (reliance on God), and *shiddiq* (honesty), which in turn reduce the risk of moral hazard in financial dealings. The same study found that BMTs led by kyai experienced lower default rates and higher community participation compared to their non-kyai-led counterparts. This indicates that the kyai's moral leadership functions as a form of soft governance—unwritten, yet binding—especially in rural or faith-based economies where legal enforcement may be weak.

From a governance perspective, kyai embody a form of **value-based leadership** that aligns with the *maqasid al-shariah*—Islamic objectives of law—ensuring that business decisions uphold human dignity, equity, and ethical responsibility. This moral framework resonates with the growing global discourse on stakeholder capitalism and ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) models. While secular business models often require formal structures for accountability, the kyai's leadership achieves similar outcomes through *ta'dib* (ethical education) and *uswah hasanah* (exemplary conduct), influencing not only managerial decisions but also employee behavior (Susanto & Widodo, 2022).

The influence of kyai in business is also evident in the success of pesantrenpreneurship programs. Data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag, 2023) shows that over 500 pesantren in Indonesia have developed self-sustaining business units under the guidance of kyai, ranging from agribusiness and halal culinary to digital marketing. These businesses often operate on Islamic cooperative principles, where profit-sharing and ethical finance are prioritized. The kyai's ethical leadership not only ensures Shariah compliance but also mobilizes social trust, volunteerism, and long-term community engagement—elements rarely present in profit-maximizing enterprises.

Challenges remain. As pesantren economies scale up, the capacity of kyai to handle complex financial governance is tested. Some scholars warn of the need for formal managerial training to complement their spiritual leadership (Ma'ruf & Ridwan, 2024). Balancing charisma with corporate competence is essential to ensure long-term institutional sustainability. The model of kyai-led ethical governance presents an indigenous alternative to mainstream corporate ethics—a



model deeply rooted in local wisdom, spiritual authority, and communal trust.

5. Utilization of Local Resources for Sustainable Development

The strategic utilization of local resources is a cornerstone of sustainable development, especially in rural and underdeveloped areas where economic reliance on external inputs can increase vulnerability. By leveraging endogenous assets—such as natural resources, traditional knowledge, cultural capital, and local skills—communities can foster economic resilience while preserving ecological and socio-cultural integrity. Local resources, when managed sustainably, not only reduce environmental degradation but also stimulate inclusive growth, community empowerment, and intergenerational equity. This approach is closely aligned with the principles of *sustainable livelihoods* and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goals 1 (No Poverty), 8 (Decent Work), and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

In Indonesia numerous case studies illustrate how communities have transformed local resources into engines of sustainable growth. For example, the coastal village of Tanjung Lesung in Banten has capitalized on its marine biodiversity to develop eco-tourism and community-based fisheries, creating jobs while conserving marine ecosystems (BPS, 2023). Similarly, rural areas in East Nusa Tenggara have advanced their local weaving industry (*tenun ikat*) as a cultural product with economic value, supported by government and NGO partnerships for training and market access (UNDP Indonesia, 2022). These initiatives rely on circular economy principles—minimizing waste, maximizing reuse, and building economic loops around local materials and knowledge systems.

Academic studies reinforce the value of local resource utilization. Research by Rahmawati and Setiawan (2023) found that micro-enterprises based on local raw materials—such as bamboo, coconut fiber, and medicinal plants—not only reduce production costs but also support environmental sustainability and community welfare. In many cases, local entrepreneurship thrives when rooted in culturally embedded practices, as it cultivates ownership, pride, and long-term stewardship. Moreover, Islamic economic principles advocate for the responsible use of *ni'mah* (God's blessings) and the avoidance of *israf* (wastefulness), which naturally align with sustainable development ethics. This theological framework reinforces the obligation to manage local resources in a way that benefits both current and future generations (Antonio, 2011).



Digital innovation also plays a role in amplifying the impact of local resources. E-commerce platforms like *Tokopedia* and *Bukalapak* have enabled rural artisans and farmers to market their locally sourced products to national and international audiences. According to a 2024 report by the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, over 62% of microbusinesses that integrate local resources with digital marketing have experienced at least a 40% increase in revenue (Kemenkop UKM, 2024). Such integration reflects the potential of combining traditional economies with modern tools to achieve sustainability.

Despite these promising developments, challenges remain, including limited infrastructure, lack of access to credit, and gaps in technical expertise. Therefore, sustainable development through local resources requires a multi-stakeholder approach—where government, academia, private sector, and local communities collaborate to create enabling ecosystems. Education and capacity-building programs are also critical in ensuring that resource utilization remains efficient, inclusive, and environmentally sound.

Discussion: The Social Economy Model Based on Pesantren Communities in the Post-Truth Era

Tabel 2. Social Capital Theory and Its Application in Pesantren-Based Social Economy

Key Element	Putnam's Original Concept (2000)	Application in Pesantren Context
Trust	Trust among citizens strengthens democracy and institutional performance.	Religious trust (<i>amanah</i>) among kyai, santri, and community reinforces ethical business governance.
Norms of Reciprocity	Social norms encourage cooperation for mutual benefit and reduce transactional cost.	Shared Islamic norms (<i>ukhuwah, maslahah</i>) promote collective welfare and discourage exploitation.
Civic Engagement	Networks of voluntary associations enhance social cohesion and collective problem-solving.	Pesantren run cooperatives, BMTs, and waqf institutions as forms of civic Islamic economic engagement.
Bonding Social Capital	Reinforces strong in-group loyalty, typically in homogenous communities.	Pesantren communities are tightly-knit and spiritually



		unified, enabling high loyalty and low default risk.
Bridging Social Capital	Connects across diverse groups to access broader opportunities and innovation.	Pesantren engage with external NGOs, fintech platforms, and markets while maintaining Islamic ethics.
Institutional Performance	Effective institutions emerge from robust social capital and participatory culture.	Pesantren economies show resilience and ethical governance even in the absence of formal legal frameworks.

Source: Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000)

Social Capital Theory as articulated by Putnam (2000) provides a compelling framework for analyzing the resilience and productivity of pesantren-based economies in Indonesia. Putnam emphasized that social capital—comprising trust, norms of reciprocity, and civic engagement is essential for the smooth functioning of both democratic institutions and economic systems. In the pesantren context, these elements are deeply embedded in the religious and communal life of the community. Trust (*amanah*) between kyai, santri, and the broader pesantren circle fosters strong ethical accountability in business transactions and cooperative management. Norms of reciprocity, grounded in Islamic principles such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *maslahah* (public benefit), encourage resource-sharing, reduce exploitation, and promote social equity.

Civic engagement manifests through pesantren-based institutions like BMTs (Baitul Maal wat Tamwil), cooperatives, and waqf management units that operate collectively to meet community needs. Putnam’s concept of bonding social capital is reflected in the high in-group loyalty within pesantren, creating tight networks of trust and mutual support that enhance participation and reduce default risk in microfinance systems. Meanwhile, bridging capital is evident in pesantren’s growing collaboration with NGOs, digital marketplaces, and government agencies, showing their ability to innovate without sacrificing religious identity. Despite often operating outside formal state structures, pesantren economies maintain effective governance through strong communal norms and religious authority, aligning with Putnam’s argument that robust social capital enhances institutional performance. Therefore, the pesantren’s integration of Putnam’s theoretical components substantiates their function not just as spiritual centers, but as socially embedded economic agents capable of ethical, inclusive, and sustainable development.



CONCLUSION

The findings of this study affirm that pesantren-based communities in Indonesia embody a distinctive and resilient model of social economy that integrates Islamic ethical values, collective economic practices, and adaptive governance mechanisms. In the face of the post-truth era, where disinformation and fragmented trust have eroded conventional socio-economic systems, pesantren offer an alternative rooted in spiritual legitimacy, social capital, and religiously inspired economic behavior. This model is sustained by six interlocking pillars: religious-based economic motivation, integration of zakat and waqf, community trust as economic capital, ethical leadership by *kyai*, utilization of local resources, and the operationalization of Social Capital Theory. Empirical data throughout the study illustrates how pesantren communities build reciprocal trust, civic engagement, and communal resilience, thus reinforcing Putnam's (2000) theory in a local Islamic context. Economic initiatives such as BMTs, pesantrenpreneurship, and digitalized waqf-zakat instruments demonstrate that Islamic values can coexist with modern economic tools to generate inclusive and sustainable outcomes. Moreover, *kyai* leadership not only strengthens institutional ethics but also reinforces cultural legitimacy, particularly in rural and marginalized settings. Challenges such as limited managerial capacity and infrastructure gaps persist, yet the embedded nature of religious values and social bonds in pesantren continues to offer both normative and operational strength. Therefore, this research concludes that pesantren-based social economy models are not merely religious constructs but offer a viable, ethical, and scalable framework for socio-economic development in the Global South—resilient not only against neoliberal pressures but also the epistemic chaos of the post-truth world.

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