

Community-Based Participatory Research for Pesantren: Developing a Business Database of HEBITREN Solo Raya

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Abstract - Pesantren are key drivers of community-based economic development in Indonesia, yet both pesantren and relevant government agencies often lack reliable business data, limiting effective policy design and targeted interventions. This study applies a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach to build a comprehensive business database of 21 pesantren under the HEBITREN Solo Raya network. By engaging pesantren leaders and business managers in identifying, collecting, and validating data, CBPR ensures accuracy, relevance, and a sense of ownership. The project involved focus group discussions, structured surveys, and in-depth interviews, followed by community validation meetings. The resulting database maps business types, turnover, managerial profiles, and operational challenges. These data are crucial to designing evidence-based, impactful programs that strengthen pesantren businesses and improve resource allocation. Findings show diverse economic activities—agribusiness, culinary ventures, and retail—with significant potential, yet hindered by limited access to capital, digital marketing, and managerial skills. This study demonstrates CBPR as an effective model for building data-driven strategies to empower the pesantren economy.

Keywords - Business database, CBPR, community empowerment, HEBITREN Solo Raya, pesantren business

I. INTRODUCTION

Pesantren are the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia as centers of knowledge, religion, and empowerment that play a role in instilling morals and character among students [1], [2]. Rizaty [3] Suhirman[4] Retnowati[5] shows that pesantren have diverse business potential, with the cooperative, MSME, and Islamic economy (Sharia economics) sectors being the most dominant economic fields. In addition, the livestock sector is also quite developed, indicating that many pesantren have managed agribusiness-based enterprises[6]. However, there are still pesantren that have not developed their economic potential, thus opening opportunities for pesantren to innovate and develop new and more diverse business units[7] [8]. Many pesantren have developed business units such as cooperatives, agriculture, livestock, and even creative industries that involve students and the surrounding community[9]. By optimizing business potential in various sectors, pesantren can play a greater role in promoting community economic independence [10], [11].

With their large numbers and widespread distribution across various regions, Islamic boarding schools have great potential to become community-based economic ecosystems[12] [13]. Based on data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs on the Independence of Islamic Boarding Schools in 2024, the 2024 Islamic Boarding School Independence Exhibition showed a positive trend with a total transaction value of IDR 410,135 from 50 booths and 1,554 visitors. Additionally, the independence program from 2021 to 2025 has reached 3,578 Islamic boarding schools, producing 658 products, 315 types of businesses, and 36 BUMPes (Islamic Boarding School-Owned Businesses). This indicates that Islamic boarding schools have the potential to become drivers of community-based creative economy [14].

The Himpunan Ekonomi Bisnis Pesantren (HEBITREN), is an independent organization formed to accelerate the resilience and economic development of Islamic boarding schools[15] [16]. Islamic boarding schools in the Greater Solo area now focus not only on religious education, but also function as centers for the development of sharia-based MSMEs. Examples of several boarding schools, such as the Kyai Ageng Selo Islamic Boarding School (Klaten) and the Al-Muayyad Windan Islamic

Boarding School (Sukoharjo), utilize integrated agricultural businesses such as IoT-based greenhouses to maximize vegetable growth.

Additionally, HEBITREN plays a crucial role in promoting the economic independence of Islamic boarding schools by strengthening access to digital markets[17], such as the HEBIMART Virtual Market available on the official HEBITREN website. Despite challenges such as limited business data management and low digital literacy, HEBITREN's efforts in building business replicas, virtual markets between Islamic boarding schools, and halal value chains have strengthened the position of Islamic boarding schools as key players in the development of the sharia economy in the Greater Solo area [18].

This study aims to explain community service efforts through the Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) method in data collection and identifying the business potential of HEBITREN members. The CBPR approach was chosen because it actively involves HEBITREN members in the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes. The results of this study are expected to increase members' understanding of their business potential and develop more focused business development strategies. In addition, this research can support decision-making and community economic empowerment, especially for HEBITREN Solo Raya members who are currently collaborating with many stakeholders.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted directly by the research team through collaboration with the community and participation with the support and expertise of each member of the research team to explore data and information, so that the research method used was Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR). The CBPR method was used to answer problems while empowering the community as active subjects, not just research objects [19]. This approach is in line with the mission of HEBITREN Solo Raya as an organization that focuses on community-based economic development in Islamic boarding schools. The stages carried out in the research using the CBPR method were as follows:

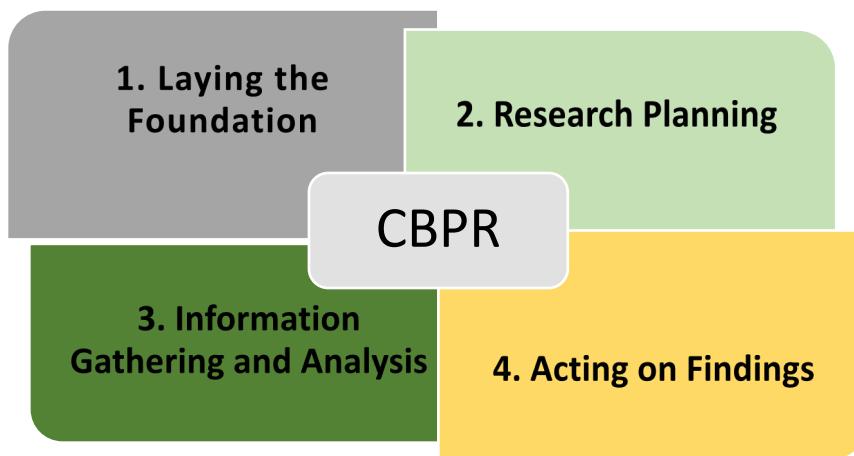


Figure 1. CBPR model in PKM [20]

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with questions to explore information about business potential in 21 Islamic boarding schools spread across the Klaten, Surakarta, and Sukoharjo regions. The list of Islamic boarding schools is as follows:

Table 1. List of Islamic Boarding Schools used in this Study

Klaten	Surakarta	Sukoharjo
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pondok Pesantren Kyai Ageng Selo 2. Pondok Pesantren Al Qohar 3. PPTQ Hamilul Qur'an 4. Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Klaten 5. Pondok Pesantren Al Akhyar 6. Pondok Pesantren Baiturrahmah Solo Peduli 7. Pondok Pesantren Al-Manshur Popongan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PPM Miftakhul Khoirot 2. Pondok Pesantren Budi Luhur (LDII) 3. Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Wata'limil Quran 4. Pondok Pesantren Ta'mirul Islam 5. PPM Roudhotul Jannah 6. Budi Utomo Pesantren Solo (LDII) 7. Pondok Pesantren Hidayatullah Al-Kahfi 8. Pondok Pesantren Al-Izzah 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pondok pesantren Muhammad Al Fatih 2. Pondok Pesantren Al-Ukhudah Sukoharjo 3. Pondok Pesantren Al-Muayyad Windan 4. Pondok Pesantren Al-Fattah 5. PPTQ Al Hikmah Muhammadiyah 6. Pondok Pesantren Barokah Bendosari

III. RESULTS

The urgency of conducting a pesantren business data collection program lies in its role as an initial step in developing the economic and business ecosystem of HEBITREN Solo Raya. The research team directly gathered primary data through interviews with pesantren business managers to ensure that their business programs were actively operating. The data collected included business types, detailed categories of trade, processing, and services, as well as the challenges faced, the number of managers involved, and the average turnover generated. This comprehensive data collection provides a clear picture of pesantren business dynamics and serves as a foundation for designing more targeted and impactful development programs.

Types of Business Already Operating

Table 2. Frequency Types Business Already Operating

Business Classification	frequency
Trade Sector	3
Manufacturing Sector	12
Integrated Trade and Processing Sector	5
None	1
Total Number	21

Based on the data obtained, the most common type of business operating in Islamic boarding schools is in the processing sector, with 21 boarding schools engaged in this activity. Meanwhile, 8 boarding schools also operate businesses in the trade sector. However, there is 1 boarding school that does not have any business activities operating on its premises.

Trade Category

Table 3. Frequency of Business Types in the Trade Category

Business Type	Frequency
Retail Store	6
Processing	5
Merchandise	1
Used Car Trading and Soy Milk Sales	1
Bottled Water Business	2
Cafeteria	1
Coffee, Skincare, and Herbal Extract Products	1
None	2
Others	2
Total Number	21

In the trade sector, retail stores occupy the top position with six Islamic boarding schools having their own retail stores, followed by five boarding schools that trade their own processed products. Several other boarding schools are involved in trading used cars, coffee, skin care products, merchandise, and so on. In the drinking water trade, almost all Islamic boarding schools limit their business to meeting the daily drinking water needs of the Islamic boarding school, but only 2 Islamic boarding schools have started to market their products widely.

Processing Sector

Table 4: Distribution of Business Types within the Processing Category

Business Type	Frequency
Packaged Beverages	9
Agriculture/Plantations	5
Packaged Snacks	4
Bags/Handicrafts	1
Food Catering	1
Livestock/Fishery	1
None	2

In the processing sector, the packaged beverage sector recorded the highest number with 8 Islamic boarding schools already having packaged beverage products, followed by the agriculture/plantation sector with 5 Islamic boarding schools already having products in this sector. Furthermore, in the packaged snacks sector, 4 Islamic boarding schools already have this product, while the rest are divided into the seasoning, catering, fisheries, and livestock sectors.

Service

Table 5. Frequency of Business Types in the Service Category

Business Types	Frequency
Not Yet	8
None	4
Processing	3
Other	2
Retail Stores	1
Trading and Processing	1
Laundry	1

Most Islamic boarding schools do not yet have business activities in the service sector. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the potential of the service sector in Islamic boarding schools so that they can develop more diverse business activities in the service sector and support the entrepreneurial interests of students studying at these Islamic boarding schools. Of course, this cannot be done easily; it requires support from various parties, namely pesantren administrators and HEBITREN as an organization that facilitates Islamic boarding schools in carrying out business activities.

Challenges

Table 6: Frequency of Constraints in Business Development

Types of Constraints	Frequency
Market and Marketing Constraints	9
Production and Quality Assurance Constraints	9
Financial Administration and Capital Constraints	4
Human Resources and Competency Constraints	3
Place and Time Constraints	1
Crop Maintenance Constraints	1

Common problems faced by business activities in Islamic boarding schools include market and marketing constraints, production constraints, and quality assurance. Therefore, HEBITREN, as an organization that assists business activities in Islamic boarding schools[15], can help overcome these problems by holding seminars or workshops on digital marketing, conducting training related to production management, and facilitating quality assurance certification.

Overview of Managers

Table 7. Business Management HR Frequency

Types of Constraints	Frequency
Managed by the Boarding School Management and Students	7
Managed by the Boarding School Management	3
Managed by the Boarding School Management and Parties Outside the Boarding School	3
Managed by a Party Outside the Pondok	2
Managed by students	1
Managed by the Boarding School Management, Students, and Parties Outside the Boarding School	1

None	1
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Table 8. Frequency of Number of Islamic Boarding School Business Managers

category	Frequency
More than 3 People	15
3 People	1
2 People	4
none	1

Most of the business activities carried out in school dormitories are managed directly by the school dormitory administrators and also involve students. This is certainly beneficial not only to support additional income for the school dormitory, but also to provide valuable experience for students equipped with entrepreneurial skills.

Revenue

Table 9: Business Turnover Frequency per Month

Turnover Category	Frequency
Unknown	2
Less than Rp 500.000	3
Rp 500.000 - Rp 2.000.000	5
Rp 2.000.000 – Rp 6.000.000	4
Rp 10.000.000 - Rp 15.000.000	1
± Rp 40.000.000	3

The monthly turnover of HEBITREN members varies significantly. Starting from less than IDR 500,000 (14.3%), IDR 500,000 – IDR 2,000,000 (28.6%), and others more than IDR 2,000,000, even reaching more than IDR 40,000,000.

IV. DISCUSSION

Laying the Foundation Stages

The first stage, Laying the Foundation, is an important first step in ensuring the smooth running of the research process using CBPR[21]. In this phase, the research team from UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta sought out contacts and established initial relationships with Islamic boarding schools in the Surakarta, Klaten, and Sukoharjo areas. The team then visited the chair and secretary of HEBITREN Solo Raya through face-to-face meetings to gain their trust.

This process also explained the research objectives, scope of activities, and benefits to be gained by each Islamic boarding school, so that all parties understood their roles and contributions. In addition, during this phase, the team drew up a meeting schedule and internal division of tasks to ensure that data was obtained quickly and efficiently. Through a collaborative approach, a strong relationship was created between the research team and the Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), thereby creating a

conducive working environment and increasing mutual commitment to achieving the research objectives.



Images 1. Documentation

Research Planning

The Research Planning stage is the phase where the research plan is developed together with the HEBITREN Solo Raya management. The research team and HEBITREN management collaborate to formulate relevant research questions, determine the methodology to be used, and develop a questionnaire for data collection using Google Forms. In addition, the team reviews research ethics and ensures the confidentiality of respondent data.

The result of this stage is the mapping of Islamic boarding schools according to the areas identified as research subjects. The research team then successfully established initial communication through the WhatsApp application as the main tool for arranging meeting schedules. Through short messages, the team successfully established good relations with the Islamic boarding schools through polite and professional introductions, then adjusted the visit schedule based on the availability of the Islamic boarding schools to ensure flexibility and convenience for all parties. The team divided the tasks to ensure the efficiency of the data collection process in each region.

Information Gathering and Analysis Stage

At this stage, the team carried out field data collection activities according to the schedule that had been prepared. The methods used included in-depth interviews with pesantren leaders, focus group discussions (FGD) with pesantren administrators, and participatory observation of daily activities at the pesantren. The interview questions asked by the researchers concerned the business potential, obstacles, and opportunities in each pesantren based on a predetermined list of questions. Each interview was compiled and documented using Google Forms to ensure security and ease of further analysis.

Acting on Findings Stages

The “Acting on Findings” stage is an important part of the Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach, which aims to translate findings into concrete actions in the community. In the context of this study, the team conducted a series of follow-up actions based on data collected from 21 Islamic boarding schools in Sukoharjo, Klaten, and Surakarta. The most dominant business potential among these Islamic boarding schools is in the integrated agriculture, livestock, culinary, grocery store, education services, and waste management sectors.

In response to these findings, the team was able to develop and implement a number of activities such as needs-based entrepreneurship workshops, training in digital marketing through social media and marketplace platforms, and strengthening networks between Islamic boarding schools through HEBIMART. This initiative should also be supported by facilitating product packaging and branding

development, as well as establishing student cooperatives as the economic foundation of the boarding schools. In this way, boarding schools will not only serve as centers for religious education but also actively participate as community-based local economic actors.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research involving 21 Islamic boarding schools that are members of HEBITREN in the Sukoharjo, Klaten, and Surakarta areas, it appears that the most developed businesses are in the processing sector, particularly packaged beverages, followed by the trade and agriculture sectors. The service sector is still very minimal, so there are great opportunities for diversification into more varied services, such as research or information technology based on Islamic boarding schools.

The Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) process, which ranged from in-depth interviews to focus group discussions (FGDs), helped formulate and identify strategies for developing these Islamic boarding school businesses, demonstrating the success of participatory methods in community empowerment. However, the researchers also revealed that there are still obstacles such as limited market access, lack of expertise and online marketing, and challenges in maintaining product quality consistency. To overcome this, it is recommended to hold entrepreneurship workshops tailored to needs, digital marketing training through social media and marketplaces, and the formation of networks between Islamic boarding schools through HEBIMART.

In order for the results of this research to be positive and sustainable, the role of HEBITREN as a facilitator and mentor for pesantren members is very important. The joint commitment between pesantren administrators, the research team, and the support of local governments and other stakeholders needs to be continuously strengthened. Thus, pesantren will not only become centers of spiritual education, but also driving forces for independent and innovative pesantren-based sharia economics.

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