

## The Role of Islamic Education in Strengthening Social Religious Independence and Empowerment Community in Ngali Village

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine in depth the role of Islamic education in strengthening communal independence and socio-religious empowerment of the community in Ngali Village, Belo District, Bima Regency, West Nusa Tenggara. This research is strengthened by the empirical gap between the transformative potential of Islamic education, especially through Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), madrasahs, majelis taklim (Islamic study groups), and community-based religious study groups (pesantren) with the reality of socio-economic dependency that is still rooted in rural Indonesian Muslim communities. This study uses a qualitative approach with an in-depth case study design that combines participant observation, in-depth interviews with 32 key informants, and analysis of institutional documents over twelve months. The research findings identify four transformative mechanisms: strengthening epistemic capacity based on Islamic values; the formation of religious social networks that expand social capital; internalization of Islamic work ethics as a basis for economic independence; and the construction of collective religious identity that strengthens social cohesion and community resilience. This research contributes to the development of a community-based Islamic education model that goes beyond ritual-normative orientation to a comprehensive social transformation agenda. The theoretical and practical implications of this research are relevant for the development of Islamic education policies in rural Indonesia and the context of the global Muslim community facing the challenges of modernization.

**Keywords:** Islamic Education, Communal Independence, Social and Religious Empowerment, Ngali Village, Social Transformation

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### INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia has gone beyond the function of merely transmitting religious knowledge, and is now increasingly recognized as a driving force for social transformation that has the structural capacity to shape a more independent, just, and empowered social order. (Harahap, 2025). In a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, the question of how Islamic education contributes to community empowerment is both academically relevant and policy-critical. However, previous research has tended to focus on the normative-doctrinal aspects of Islamic education or on examining the effectiveness of Islamic educational institutions in urban settings, while the transformative dynamics of Islamic education in rural communities with their distinctive socio-cultural characteristics remain significantly neglected in the academic literature. (Aly & Ngampo, 2025).

Ngali Village, located in Belo District, Bima Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, offers a rich academic context for study. The village has a long history of involvement with Islamic educational institutions, ranging from traditional Islamic study groups (halaqah) that have been operating since the 19th century, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) established in the mid-20th century, formal madrasahs integrated into the national education system, to religious study groups (masjid taklim) and women's study groups that have flourished in the past two decades. The complexity of this Islamic educational ecosystem makes Ngali Village an ideal social

laboratory for testing hypotheses about the dual role of Islamic education as an agent of value transmission and an agent of social change. (Fernando et al., 2026).

Furthermore, this issue shows that Belo District, where Ngali Village is located, is still classified as an area with a human development index below the provincial average, with a poverty rate reaching 18.7 percent and a relatively high unemployment rate among youth. This paradox, where a community rich in religious institutions still faces limited development, raises a fundamental academic question: has Islamic education in this region been able to bridge the gap between the transformative values of Islam and the realities of the community's socio-economic life? Second, from a theoretical dimension, there is an unresolved academic debate about whether Islamic education functions as a structural reproduction that maintains the status quo, or whether it has the capacity to be a catalyst for genuine social change. Third, from a policy dimension, the absence of an empirical, contextual, and measurable model of community-based Islamic education makes it difficult for policymakers to design effective educational interventions in rural Muslim communities. (Pembelaran et al., nd).

Several literature reviews relevant to this research, including research on the sociological tradition of Islamic education, and the works of Azyumardi Azra (2004, 2019) on the network of ulama and the modernization of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, have provided a framework for understanding the capacity of Islamic educational institutions to build social capital. This perspective is expanded by (Rozana et al., 2026) which emphasizes the political dimension of post-Reformation Islamic education, as well as by (Bahdar, 2024) which examines gender roles in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. From the perspective of community empowerment, Robert Chambers' (1994) theoretical contribution on participatory rural appraisal and thinking (Rozana et al., 2026) about education as liberative praxis becomes a fertile analytical framework for understanding the transformative potential of Islamic education in the context of rural communities.

At the regional level, research (Religion & Islam, 2025) on Islamic boarding schools and community empowerment in Java, Lukens-Bull's (2005) study on the relationship between Islamic boarding school education and Indonesian Muslim identity, and the study (Iqbal et al., 2025) Research on the pesantren tradition as a social system has paved the way for a more nuanced understanding of the social function of Islamic educational institutions. However, these studies have predominantly focused on Javanese and Java-centric contexts, so the experiences of Muslim communities in Eastern Indonesia, including West Nusa Tenggara, with their distinctive Bima Adat traditions, have not received proportional academic representation in the literature.

The novelty of this research lies in at least four original contributions that distinguish it from previous studies. First, this study is the first to systematically map the Islamic education ecosystem in Ngali Village using a multidimensional empowerment analytical framework, which simultaneously encompasses epistemic, social, economic, and cultural dimensions. Second, this study integrates the emic perspective of the Ngali community's voices and lived experiences with an etic analytical framework based on critical sociology of education theory, resulting in a richer synthesis than studies that rely solely on one perspective. Third, this study explicitly examines the role of Islamic education in the context of Bima (Mbojo) Customary Law as a local value system that dynamically interacts with Islamic values, a dimension largely absent from national Islamic education literature. Fourth, this study develops an analytical model called the Quadrant of Transformative Islamic Education (QTIE) that can be applied as an evaluative instrument to measure the transformative effectiveness of Islamic education in various rural Muslim community contexts.

Based on the above background, this study was formulated to answer three main research questions. First, what are the operational mechanisms of Islamic education in building communal independence in Ngali Village? Second, what factors mediate and moderate the relationship between Islamic education and community socio-religious empowerment? Third, how can an effective community-based Islamic education model be constructed based on the empirical experience of Ngali Village? The objectives of this study are to analyze the transformative mechanisms of Islamic education in strengthening communal independence,

identify mediating and moderating factors in the socio-religious empowerment process, and develop a conceptual model of community-based Islamic education that can be replicated in similar contexts.

## METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with an interpretivist-oriented in-depth case study design, a methodological choice based on three mutually reinforcing epistemological considerations. (Ghony & Almanshur, 2016) First, the nature of the phenomenon being studied, namely the internal process of socio-religious empowerment involving subjective experiences, meaning systems, and relational dynamics, cannot be reduced to statistical figures without losing its substance and phenomenological integrity. (Methodology et al., nd) Second, this study aims to build a dense understanding (thick description in Geertz's terminology) of the social reality of the Ngali community. (Hermawan & Pd, 2019), which requires intensive and long-term involvement of researchers in the field. Third, the theory-building orientation of this research, particularly in the development of the QTIE model, is better served by qualitative methodology that allows for emergent theorizing based on data. (Amir & Sartika, 2017).

This research was conducted in Ngali Village, Belo District, Bima Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, for twelve months between January and December 2024. (Syafei, 2025). Ngali Village was chosen based on purposive selection by considering four criteria: (1) the existence of a diverse and established ecosystem of Islamic educational institutions; (2) the existence of empirical indications of social transformation that can be linked to the existence of Islamic educational institutions; (3) adequate field accessibility for long-term research; and (4) the representativeness of the socio-cultural context that reflects the characteristics of rural Muslim communities in West Nusa Tenggara. (Seplyana, 2025). Demographically (Sumarni, 2012) Ngali Village is inhabited by around 3,400 people with a composition of 100 percent Muslims, and has at least three Islamic boarding schools, two elementary madrasas, one junior high madrasa, one senior high madrasa, seven active religious study groups, and dozens of informal study groups. (Efendi & Sesmiarni, 2022).

Data collection was conducted through three main, complementary strategies. First (Amir & Sartika, 2017b), participant observation was carried out for twelve months, with an average attendance intensity of five days per week during the first six months and three days per week in the second phase. (Yusuf et al., 2024). Observations include learning activities in Islamic boarding schools and madrasas (Arifin, 2018), religious study groups, regular religious studies, community-based economic activities initiated by alumni of Islamic educational institutions, traditional meetings, and other social activities. (Sinaga, 2022) Field notes were made systematically using a format adapted from the Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) guide, including descriptions, methodological reflections, and initial interpretations. (Yusuf et al., 2024).

Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with 32 key informants selected through a multi-level purposive sampling technique, including: 8 leaders and teachers of Islamic educational institutions (kiai, ustaz, and ustazah), 6 community and traditional leaders, 4 village and sub-district government officials, 7 alumni of Islamic educational institutions actively involved in socio-economic activities, 5 active members of the majelis taklim, and 2 youth leaders. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian and Bima (Nggahi Mbojo) according to the informants' preferences. (Hasibuan, 2024), with a duration of between 60 to 150 minutes per session (Sari et al., 2023) All interviews were recorded with the informants' permission and transcribed verbatim. Snowball sampling was applied to identify additional informants who had specific knowledge about certain aspects of the phenomenon under study. (Ahyat, 2017).

Third, document analysis was carried out on various documentary sources, including: curriculum documents and learning programs for Islamic boarding schools and madrasas. (Dewi et al., 2024), annual activity report of Islamic educational institutions (Johni Dimiyati, 2013), historical records on the establishment and development of Islamic educational institutions in Ngali Village, village statistical data, documents on community empowerment

programs initiated by Islamic educational institutions, and local literature on the history and culture of Bima (Amir & Sartika, 2017).

Data analysis was conducted using an inductive-deductive thematic analysis approach adapted from the Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022) framework with modifications for the context of Islamic education research. (Nashrullah et al., 2023) The analysis process took place in six iterative stages: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated readings and making initial analytical notes; (2) open coding using NVivo 12 software; development and refinement of themes through a constant comparison process; (4) constructing a hierarchy of themes and sub-themes; (5) validation of findings through member checking with 12 key informants; and (6) writing the final analytical report. To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria of credibility (through triangulation of sources, methods, and researchers) were applied. (Nasrudin, 2019), and prolonged engagement), transferability (through adequate thick description), dependability (through a systematic audit trail), and confirmability (through documented researcher reflexivity) (Sinaga, 2022).

This research has obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the State Islamic Institute of Bima with permit number 024/IAINBIMA/KEP/2024. All informants provided written informed consent prior to participation. (Nashrullah et al., 2023). Informant anonymity is maintained through the use of pseudonyms and the omission of specific identifying details in reporting. (Johni Dimiyati, 2013) Researchers apply the principle of reciprocity by providing real contributions to the community by presenting research results in public discussion forums and providing program recommendations that can be implemented by local educational institutions. (Hasibuan, 2024).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Strengthening Epistemic Capacity Based on Islamic Values Beyond Dogmatic Transmission**

The first finding of this research reveals a crucial sociological event in which Islamic education in Ngali Village has experienced a fundamental paradigm shift in the last two decades. (Moderasi et al., 2025) The educational orientation that was previously linear and focused on the conventional transmission of religious texts through the ta'lim and tarbiyahki methods has mutated into an approach that consciously integrates the development of critical, analytical, and problem-solving thinking capacities within the framework of Islamic values. (Penelitian, 2022) This transformation is not merely an administrative change, but rather a philosophical reorientation, most evident at the Darul Hikmah Islamic Boarding School. Since its founding in 1978, the institution underwent a radical curriculum reform in 2015 under the leadership of Kiai Ahmad Zaini, who successfully broke down the barriers between classical doctrine and contemporary reality. (Irawan & Rohman, 2025).

Furthermore, data gathered through twelve months of intensive participatory observation provided empirical evidence that learning in Islamic boarding schools is no longer confined to the confines of the yellow texts (turats). Instead, the developed curriculum has been able to synthesize contemporary discussions on social, economic, and environmental crises within the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and the maqashid (maqashid) of sharia. (Proud et al., 2022) This intellectual dynamic shows that texts are no longer seen as dead entities, but rather as living instruments used to dissect the complexities of the times without losing their original roots. This change marks the birth of a generation of students who are not only proficient in theological rhetoric, but also responsive to the communal anxieties they face every day. (Suratin et al., 2025).

In one of the halaqah sessions the researcher attended, this practice of integrating knowledge was clearly manifested when the students engaged in a sharp discussion on the application of sharia economic principles to break the chain of dependence on middlemen. This issue is an existential one for local shallot farmers in Ngali Village, who have been trapped in a detrimental ijon (usury) scheme. The discussion went beyond simply quoting classical fiqh texts on the laws of buying and selling; the students conducted an analytical analysis of the agricultural commodity value chain and formulated practical considerations regarding fairer marketing alternatives. These findings align with (Yulia, 2023) which emphasizes that truly

transformative Islamic education is education that is able to build organic connectivity between classical scientific knowledge and real problems in the field. (November et al., 2025).

The strengthening of epistemic capacity developed in Ngali Village demonstrates a unique dimension that key informants term 'faith-based reason.' This concept practically means the ability to engage in rational deliberation on various social problems without abandoning the normative and ethical framework of Islam as the primary compass. (Budaya & Abror, n.d.) Here, rationality is not pitted against revelation, but rather used as a tool to fulfill devotion to God through intelligent social action. Education here not only fills cognitive space but also builds intellectual character with the moral courage to intervene against injustices occurring in their environment.

Kiai Muhammad Tahir, the leader of the Al-Ikhlas Islamic Study Group (Majelis Taklim Al-Ikhlas), who has dedicated his life since 1995, made an interesting statement in an in-depth interview conducted by researchers. He stated that someone who truly understands religion will have the courage to face problems, because he understands that trust in God is not a form of passivity, but rather the culmination of maximum effort. This statement reflects the concept of Islamic education in Ngali Village as an effort to shape an epistemic habitus that is simultaneously oriented toward transcendental values and aligned with social practice. Religious education thus becomes a driving force, not merely a solace amidst the pressures of poverty or economic limitations. (No Title, n.d.-a).

Therefore, the existing literature suggests that these findings strongly resonate with the concept of the educated Muslim as developed by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1980) within his Islamic educational philosophy. However, there is a significant contextual difference: while al-Attas developed his conception through a philosophical-normative perspective that tended to be elitist, the findings in Ngali Village demonstrate how these lofty principles were organically operationalized by rural communities. This provides strong evidence for Bruinessen's (2011) argument that the intellectual vitality of Islamic education in Indonesia often blossoms from the grassroots. The strength of this movement stems from limitations, proving that intellectualism does not always require the luxury of formal academic facilities to thrive. (No Title, 2025).

The gender dimension in strengthening epistemic capacity also emerged as a reality on the ground that deserves special attention and in-depth analysis. This research found that seven women's religious study groups in Ngali Village, with a total membership of 340, have transformed into highly progressive dialectical spaces. These forums are no longer merely ritualistic learning spaces, but have become platforms for developing critical capacity for rural women in addressing issues of reproductive health, women's rights in Islam, child-rearing practices, and complex household financial management. The existence of these assemblies demonstrates that intellectual empowerment at the village level has successfully reached the most core social strata, namely mothers. (Chandra & Ulum, 2025).

Ustazah Halimah, the leader of the village's largest religious study group, explained that the topic selection was conducted through deliberative means based on the real needs of its members. She emphasized that learning about wives' rights, for example, was approached not only through normative fiqh literature but also through open discussions based on the members' real-life experiences. This finding substantially reinforces the argument. (Arief et al., 2020) regarding the capacity of the majelis taklim as a space for gender negotiation in Islam. However, this study expands on that analysis by showing that these negotiations have a strong epistemic dimension; rural women in Ngali Village not only demand political rights but also build a solid intellectual foundation to support their bargaining position within social and domestic structures.

### **Formation of Religious Social Networks and Expansion of Social Capital**

The analysis in this second part delves deeper into the sociological dimension, where Islamic educational institutions in Ngali Village have been shown to function as architects of a crucial social network for community resilience. This network is not simply a collection of individuals, but rather a social infrastructure capable of mobilizing massive resources when the

community faces structural impasses or crises.(1 , 2 1, 2025)By using religious identity as an anchor of trust, Islamic boarding schools successfully connect local potential with strategic opportunities at the national level through the active participation of their alumni. Using the concept of "barakat mobilization," this section will explain how the social capital born from religious education transforms into a tangible force capable of transcending geographical barriers and the rigidity of village bureaucracy.(Dalam & Tangga, 2018).

The second finding in this study reveals in-depth that Islamic educational institutions in Ngali Village play a key role in building, maintaining, and mobilizing the religious social network that serves as the backbone of the residents' independence. From the perspective of Putnam's (2000) social capital theory, this network encompasses two complementary forces: bonding social capital, which strengthens the residents' internal solidarity, and bridging social capital, which opens the way for the community to access resources beyond the village boundaries. The combination of these two elements creates a structure of social resilience that enables the Ngali community to remain strong and empowered despite the limitations of its circumstances.(Murtado, 2025).

In this context, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) act as the most influential meeting center or nexus of social networks. Field data shows that the alumni diaspora of Islamic boarding schools from Ngali Village now occupy a wide variety of strategic positions; they are not only religious leaders or educators, but also active as government officials, entrepreneurs, community organization activists, and professionals in various sectors. This alumni network is not left to remain a passive relationship, but is actively mobilized for the collective benefit of the community through various channels, from distributing economic information to advocating for policies at the district and provincial levels.(Na et al., n.d.).

Kiai Hasan Abdullah, the leader of the oldest Islamic boarding school in the village, described this power with a poignant analogy; he called this network an "invisible treasure whose value far exceeds all the physical buildings owned by the Islamic boarding school." This statement emphasizes that the true strength of Islamic educational institutions in rural areas lies not in their physical splendor, but in the bonds of brotherhood between people united by shared spiritual values. This network is the main capital that allows the village to have bargaining power and access to opportunities that are often beyond the reach of the formal village bureaucracy alone.(No Title, n.d.-b).

This then reveals a unique and recurring pattern of network activation, which in this research I call the "barakat mobilization" cycle. When residents face real challenges such as a failed onion harvest, a natural disaster, or the urgent need to build public facilities, this social network mobilizes through requests to influential religious figures. These figures then mobilize their relationships with unbelievable speed, transforming social connections into tangible financial and logistical assistance in a very short time.(Pengelolaan et al., 2021).

The collective response to the flood disaster that struck Ngali Village in March 2024 is clear evidence of this movement's effectiveness. In just 72 hours, the Islamic boarding school alumni network was able to collect material and financial assistance worth over Rp 180 million from various parties, both within and outside the region. These results expand Adler and Kwon's (2002) understanding of social capital mobilization by demonstrating the strong religious motivation at play. Here, the desire to help is not merely a matter of ordinary humanity, but rather a drive to seek blessings, which makes this social action far more powerful and sustainable.

The external side of the Islamic educational network in Ngali is also evident in the close relationships established with major organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, as well as various national zakat and humanitarian institutions. These cross-regional relationships are fostered by mutual trust built on a shared religious identity. Ngali Village Secretary, Mr. Haris Maulana, himself an alumnus of the local madrasah, emphasized that outsiders' trust in their village is largely determined by the reputation of local clerics among national clerics. This proves the point.(No Title, 2022)that trust is a 'lubricant' for social cooperation, while also showing that religion is capable of being a connecting bridge even though they are separated by great geographical distance.

However, building networks through Islamic education also presents significant challenges and contradictions. This research found a tendency toward closed relationships within some groups, where access to network benefits is typically more easily obtained by those with family ties or special ties to educational leaders. This situation carries the risk of the emergence of a new social class based on closeness to religious figures, which could ultimately undermine the values of equality taught by Islam itself. (Bantul, 2008).

This reality on the ground reminds me of Bourdieu's (1986) critique that social capital can perpetuate inequality if not carefully managed. Therefore, these findings demonstrate that community empowerment through religious networks requires careful awareness to avoid exclusivity. Efforts to open access as widely as possible to all villagers without discrimination are crucial, so that the blessings of Islamic educational institutions in Ngali Village can truly be enjoyed by all levels of society, for the sake of true village independence.

### **Internalization of Islamic Work Ethic as the Basis for Community Economic Independence**

The analysis in this section examines the internalization mechanism of the Islamic work ethic, which serves as a driving force for the economic independence of the people of Ngali Village. Unlike the logic of conventional capital accumulation, Islamic education here constructs an economic paradigm based on collective blessings (*barakah*) and the principle of sufficiency (*kifayah*). Through institutions such as sharia cooperatives and productive waqf, theological values are transformed into concrete actions capable of breaking the residents' dependence on an exploitative economic system. (Raudhatul et al., 2019).

Islamic education directly contributes to the formation of a work ethic that fosters community economic independence. Unlike the Weberian perspective, which positions the Protestant work ethic as the sole catalyst for modern capitalism (Weber, 1905/2002), findings in Ngali Village demonstrate far more distinctive and contextual characteristics. The work ethic internalized through Islamic education here does not pursue aggressive individual capital accumulation, but rather is oriented toward collective blessings (*barakah*). This value emphasizes that economic success is only meaningful if it can collectively elevate the dignity of the community. (No Title, 2020a).

Therefore, Islamic education in Ngali Village shifts the paradigm of economic growth from limitless ambition to the principles of sufficiency (*kifayah*) and social responsibility (*mas'uliyah ijtimaiyyah*). In the Ngali community's worldview, work is not merely a means of survival, but a form of devotion to God that demands a balance between self-interest and the welfare of the community. Internalizing these values through religious studies and the madrasah curriculum has fostered a resilient yet ethical economic mentality. As a result, the independence created is not exploitative, but rather grows from an awareness of mutual support amidst limited rural resources.

The most concrete manifestations of this Islamic work ethic are identified in five community economic practices whose historical roots can be traced directly to Islamic educational spaces. The first practice is the tradition of agricultural mutual cooperation known as *berugu*, which has now been revitalized through the theological principle of *ta'awun*, or mutual assistance. Here, the spirit of togetherness in cultivating the land is no longer merely a customary matter but is seen as a social service that must be upheld. Second, the birth of Sharia-compliant savings and loan cooperatives, which are a response to the concerns of Islamic boarding school students (*santri*) regarding the loan shark practices that have long ensnared small farmers. (Kubro et al., n.d.).

The third, equally crucial practice is the productive waqf program managed by Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) as a sustainable funding instrument for the education of children from underprivileged families. Through professional management of waqf land, Islamic boarding schools demonstrate that the institution's economic independence can serve as a social safety net for the poorest villagers. Fourth, there is the development of a group-based Bima weaving craft business driven by the doctrine that "preserving ancestral heritage is a trust" for which accountability will be held. Fifth, the implementation of a profit-sharing system

(musyarakah) in the management of Islamic boarding school land assets, which provides a greater sense of fairness for the cultivators than conventional rental systems.(Studi et al., 2018).

Among these practices, the case of the sharia cooperative 'Baitul Maal Wa Tamwil Al-Hikmah' deserves in-depth analysis because it represents the most structured model of self-reliance. Founded in 2018 by nine alumni of Islamic high schools (madrasah aliyah) and Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), the institution began with a capital of Rp 45 million (approximately US\$3,000) in membership contributions. Within six years, the cooperative has demonstrated remarkable growth, with assets reaching Rp 1.2 billion (approximately US\$1,000) and serving 287 active members. Far more significant than these figures is how the cooperative has successfully provided microfinance to 156 small businesses in Ngali Village, which previously lacked access to formal banking.

The cooperative's governance explicitly adopts the principles of muamalah learned in Islamic boarding schools: eliminating interest on loans and replacing it with a more humane profit-sharing system. Furthermore, there is a productive zakat mechanism, which is taken from profits to help those living below the poverty line. Ustaz Mahyudin, the cooperative's chairman, emphasized that their primary foundation is the understanding that good wealth is wealth that circulates and provides benefits, not that which is hoarded for the benefit of a few. This model proves that the great theories of Islamic jurisprudence can be effectively implemented at the village level through the hands of those educated in the womb of Islamic education.(Islam & Madrasah, 2024).

A comparative analysis of these findings with global literature on Islamic social finance, such as Wilson's (2012) and Hadiz's (2016) study, reveals a remarkable local uniqueness. While in many places Islamic economics often presents itself as an externally administered program or a formal political agenda, in Ngali Village, this model grew endogenously from below. It emerged from the intersection of deep religious knowledge with the real demands of rural life. Economic independence here does not require complicated bureaucratic instructions, but rather moves organically because its values are already embedded in the spiritual consciousness of the residents.(Tunggal et al., n.d.).

These findings implicitly provide an empirical counterargument to Timur Kuran's (2011) criticism, which tends to be skeptical of the effectiveness of Islamic economic institutions. The case of Ngali Village proves that Islamic economics is not merely historical romanticism or empty jargon, but rather a dynamic force capable of adapting to the needs of the times as long as it remains rooted in the values that live within the community. When these values are instilled through a systematic educational process, they transform into cultural capital that is highly effective in breaking through the structural economic deadlock that often ignores the lower classes.(No Title, 2025b).

Once again, the gender dimension emerges as a critical variable that should not be overlooked in this analysis of economic independence. Research data shows a striking correlation: women in Ngali Village who actively participate in religious study groups (Majelis Taklim) have significantly higher levels of involvement in productive economic activities. They not only learn about ritual worship but also develop an awareness of the importance of financial independence as part of a Muslim woman's dignity. The Majlis Taklim thus serve both as a space for spiritual empowerment and an economic incubator for rural mothers.

However, of the 78 active members of the Al-Ikhlas Islamic Study Group surveyed, approximately 64 percent, or 50 women, were actively involved in at least one group-based economic activity. This figure contrasts sharply with the average participation rate for other village women, which only reached 31 percent. This pattern suggests that Islamic education for women in Ngali Village plays a powerful mediating role in encouraging economic participation. They are able to organize themselves, manage small business capital, and create jobs for each other through bonds of trust born of togetherness in religious study rooms.(Printed, 2024).

These findings confirm that Islamic education in Ngali Village has successfully redefined the meaning of prosperity within a down-to-earth spiritual framework. It does not create greedy individuals, but rather a self-sufficient and caring community. By internalizing a work

ethic based on blessings and social responsibility, the Ngali community demonstrates that religion can be a liberating force from poverty without sacrificing moral identity. This is the true manifestation of transformative education: a process that ennoble humanity both spiritually and economically amidst the increasingly complex challenges of our times.

### **Collective Religious Identity Construction and Community Resilience**

The analysis in this fourth section explores the dimensions of identity as a psychological and social anchor in the community empowerment process in Ngali Village. Islamic education in this region has proven successful in dynamically synthesizing communal values and local Bima wisdom, thus creating community resilience that is resilient to external pressures. By strengthening this hybrid identity, religious institutions not only maintain social cohesion but also build an effective ideological bulwark for the residents' survival amidst the tide of modernization. (No Tit(Le, 2020).

The fourth finding in this study highlights the identity dimension as a key pillar in the empowerment process through Islamic education—an aspect that has often been marginalized in mainstream analyses that tend to focus solely on instrumental and material capacity. This study found that Islamic education in Ngali Village operates not only at the level of transmitting technical knowledge and skills, but far more fundamentally, it builds and nurtures a collective religious identity. This identity then transforms into a solid psychological and social foundation, providing the community with extraordinary resilience in the face of the onslaught of changing times that often destabilize the local order. (Mahrus, 2025).

The concept of the 'ummah' as a religious community that transcends the primordial boundaries of family and clan plays a significant role in the social dynamics of Ngali Village. Islamic educational institutions there actively reproduce and strengthen this ummah identity through various pedagogical rituals that are consistently performed. From collective dhikr (recitation of the Qur'an), communal Qur'an recitation, to independently organized commemorations of Islamic holidays, these activities are not merely religious ceremonies. These activities serve as spaces for strengthening social solidarity that have empirically been able to increase the community's collective capacity to respond to crises in a highly organized manner. (No Title, 2025c).

The most compelling dimension of identity construction in Ngali Village is the dynamic dialectic that occurs between Islamic values and Bima (Mbojo) customary values. In contrast to the common narrative that often pits Islam and customary values against each other—a perspective that dominates the literature on Islamization in West Nusa Tenggara—this study actually finds a remarkably harmonious synthesis. In Ngali Village, Islam did not come to erase traces of local culture, but rather, it provided new meanings that strengthened their identity as religious Bima people. (Van Bruinessen, 2013).

This reinterpretation process is evident in traditional concepts such as 'maja labo dahu' (shame and fear of God) and 'nggahi rawi pahu' (consistency between words and actions). These noble values are now taught in madrasas and Islamic boarding schools as an integral part of character education based on revelation. Researchers conceptualize this phenomenon as an 'Islamic Adat synthesis,' a hybrid religious identity that simultaneously draws from the depth of Islamic tradition and the authenticity of Bima's cultural heritage. This identity provides the residents of Ngali Village with a sense of cultural self-confidence, allowing them to remain grounded in their own land amidst the tide of globalization. (Braun et al., 2008).

Community resilience, the fruit of a strong collective identity, is most clearly manifested in how the community responds to external pressures that have the potential to undermine social cohesion. This research identifies three major challenges facing the community: the penetration of radical ideologies from outside, the economic impact of climate change on the agricultural sector, and social disruption caused by youth urbanization. In addressing these three challenges, Islamic educational institutions act as institutional buffers, providing interpretive frameworks and emotional support for residents to prevent them from losing their way or falling into despair. (Stahl & Mu, 2022).

Furthermore, the response to the penetration of radical ideology in Ngali Village deserves a more in-depth analysis due to its relevance to crucial national security issues. Data shows that this community exhibits a very high level of resistance to recruitment efforts by radical groups, an interesting fact considering that the West Nusa Tenggara region had a dark history as a base for terrorist recruitment in the early 2000s. This resilience stems from a moderate yet deeply rooted Islamic education, providing the community with a strong intellectual filter against new, extreme ideologies that are inconsistent with human values. (Rogo & Baranovi, 2016).

Kiai Zainal Abidin, a senior cleric in the village, provided a very insightful explanation of this ideological immunization phenomenon. He emphasized that students with a sound understanding of Islam will not be easily swayed by teachings that merely appear Islamic but are actually destructive. His statement reinforces the thesis that quality Islamic education is the best form of "immunization" against radicalism. This analysis enriches the findings. (Azra, 2004) on the role of moderate Islamic boarding schools, adding mechanistic details regarding how collective identity functions as a protective factor that is active at the grassroots level. (Naquib, nd).

Beyond the ideological dimension, the construction of collective religious identity in Ngali Village also impacts a unique ecological-spiritual dimension. Through the Islamic education they receive, residents develop a conception of the natural environment as a trust from God that must be safeguarded with full responsibility. Nature is no longer viewed as a mere object of exploitation, but as a fellow creature of God whose sustainability is part of worship. This ecological awareness stems not from modern environmental campaigns, but from the depth of religious understanding they learn daily in religious study groups and madrasahs.

This spiritual concept has resulted in various environmental conservation practices that are naturally integrated into the daily lives of the people of Ngali Village. The prohibition on logging in protected forest areas is implemented not only out of fear of state law, but also out of religious and customary awareness that prohibits the destruction of nature. Organic farming practices are also motivated by the urge to avoid causing damage to the earth (*la tufsidu fi al-ardh*), while the maintenance of communal water sources is treated with reverence as a natural endowment whose benefits must be eternal. (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

These findings open up new perspectives on the enormous potential of Islamic education in supporting an inclusive, sustainable development agenda. In Ngali Village, community empowerment extends beyond economic and social issues to ecosystem preservation, imbued with transcendental values. A strong religious identity has been shown to foster environmentally responsible citizens. This is clear evidence that when religion is understood transformatively through an appropriate educational process, it can become a driving force for a more independent, resilient, and natural civilization.

## DISCUSSION SECTION

This research yielded several substantive findings that reflect the dynamic role of Islamic education in shaping the independence and socio-religious empowerment of the Ngali Village community. The first finding indicates that Islamic educational institutions, including madrasahs, majelis taklim (Islamic study groups), and informal Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), function not merely as vehicles for transmitting religious knowledge but also as agents of social transformation that facilitate the internalization of values of independence. This aligns with the findings of (Hanif et al., 2019), who asserted that the sustainability of Islamic education in rural Indonesian communities depends on their capacity to adaptively respond to local social needs. Islamic educational institutions in Ngali Village have proven capable of initiating empowerment programs rooted in sharia principles and relevant to the local socio-economic context. Active participation of residents in religious activities organized by these institutions helps strengthen social cohesion between groups. The presence of religious leaders as facilitators of informal education also plays a strategic role in bridging Islamic values with the community's daily practices (Social-resilience, 2022). These findings confirm that Islamic

education does not operate in isolation but is organically integrated with the community's social structure.

The second finding revealed a significant relationship between the intensity of participation in Islamic education programs and the level of individual and collective independence of the Ngali Village community. Residents who actively engage in learning processes based on Islamic values including the dimensions of faith, morals, and Islamic jurisprudence demonstrate a more independent decision-making capacity in household economics, social conflict management, and participation in village governance. (Sudiapermana, 2020) in their study of community-based education models in Lampung emphasized that integrating Islamic education with community empowerment can optimize local potential in a sustainable manner. In Ngali Village, this independence is not only economic but also socio-religious, namely the community's ability to manage religious institutions independently without excessive dependence on external actors. Religious literacy programs integrated with functional skills have been shown to increase community confidence in facing the challenges of modernization. Program participants consistently report a shift in orientation from a pattern of dependence to a pattern of self-sufficiency based on Islamic values (Winarso, 2023).

The third finding relates to the socio-religious empowerment mechanisms that operate through the network of Islamic educational institutions. This study identified three main pathways of empowerment: first, the cognitive pathway through increased religious literacy, which impacts the quality of decision-making; second, the affective pathway through the internalization of Islamic values such as *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), deliberation, and social justice, which strengthen community solidarity; and third, the structural pathway through the formation of social networks based on religious institutions that transcend primordial boundaries. These findings correlate with the perspective of (Husni & Milaturrohmah, 2025), who stated that Islamic boarding schools and similar institutions play a role in shaping individuals with superior character while contributing constructively to society. These three pathways operate synergistically and mutually reinforce each other within the Islamic educational ecosystem in Ngali Village. These findings provide a more comprehensive conceptual map of how Islamic education operates as a multidimensional empowerment system.

This study provides distinctive theoretical and empirical contributions to the discourse on Islamic education and rural community empowerment in Indonesia. The first novelty lies in the development of a triadic construct of Islamic education-based empowerment (TPBPI), which integrates cognitive, affective, and structural dimensions within a coherent analytical framework (Hanif et al., 2019). Unlike previous research that tends to examine only one dimension in isolation, this study demonstrates that all three dimensions operate simultaneously and reinforce each other in the context of rural communities. In a bibliometric review of the evolution of Islamic education research over five decades, (Lenasari & Ritonga, 2024) noted that multidimensional approaches integrating spiritual, social, and structural aspects have been relatively rarely explored empirically, particularly in the context of indigenous village communities in eastern Indonesia. This study addresses this gap by offering a more holistic and contextual analytical model. The formulated TPBPI framework also has the potential to be applied to the context of rural Muslim communities in other developing countries.

The second novelty is methodological-contextual. This study is one of the first to specifically document the socio-religious empowerment mechanisms in Ngali Village, a Muslim community in West Nusa Tenggara with distinctive socio-cultural characteristics, including a strong tradition of mutual cooperation articulated through the lens of local Islam. The ethnographic approach employed successfully captures local nuances that cannot be reduced to generic models of community empowerment. (Fahmi et al., 2024) have documented the economic impact of graduates of Islamic educational institutions, but studies on the process of internalizing values that lead to independence in the context of indigenous village communities are still very limited. This study also introduces the concept of Islamic-based independence

(KBI) as a construct that distinguishes independence from an Islamic perspective from the concept of individualistic autonomy dominant in Western empowerment literature (Al-aziziyah & Fattah, n.d.). This conceptual contribution opens up a space for productive dialogue between global empowerment theory and Islamic epistemological wisdom.

This research provides a multi-layered contribution encompassing theoretical, methodological, and practical-policy dimensions. At the theoretical level, this research enriches the discourse on the nexus between Islamic education and community empowerment by offering a TPBPI construct that can be tested and further developed in diverse contexts. This contribution responds to the call by (Hanif et al., 2019) to build a more robust theoretical framework to explain the contribution of Islamic educational institutions to developing community social capacity. Furthermore, this research enriches social capital theory by demonstrating that Islamic education-based networks in rural communities are not merely bonding social capital but also function as bridges connecting communities to broader resources and opportunities (Al-aziziyah & Fattah, n.d.). These findings have significant implications for the development of empowerment theories that are more inclusive and responsive to diverse epistemological contexts. Overall, this research contributes to the knowledge repository on the sustainability of Islamic education as a transformative force in Muslim societies in developing countries.

At the practical-policy level, this research produces evidence-based recommendations for local government stakeholders, Islamic educational institutions, and civil society organizations on strategies to optimize the role of Islamic education in fostering community independence. Findings on the effectiveness of the affective pathway of empowerment provide an empirical basis for designing character education programs that integrate Islamic values with functional competencies. This is consistent with the recommendations of (Sudiapermana, 2020) who emphasize the importance of community-based education models rooted in the local context. This research also contributes validated observation instruments and interview guidelines, which can be adopted by other researchers in comparative studies of rural Muslim communities in eastern Indonesia. Furthermore, the systematic documentation of empowerment mechanisms in Ngali Village can serve as a reference model for community development programs based on local wisdom and Islamic values.

This study is not without several limitations that need to be transparently acknowledged to maintain academic integrity and provide direction for further research. First, the study's geographic scope, limited to a single village Ngali limits the generalizability of the findings. Although qualitative research epistemologically does not prioritize statistical generalization, the analytical generalizability of the findings still needs to be validated through replication in other rural Muslim communities with different sociocultural characteristics, both in West Nusa Tenggara and in eastern Indonesia as a whole. (Winarso, 2023) note that variations in ecological and social contexts between communities produce significant differences in the dynamics of Islamic education sustainability, requiring caution in transferring findings across contexts. This limitation is inherent in the case study research design, but does not diminish the depth of the resulting analysis (Fahmi et al., 2024).

Second, this study focused on participants' subjective perceptions and experiences as constructed through in-depth interviews and observations, making it susceptible to social desirability bias, the tendency for informants to respond according to the community's normative expectations. Data triangulation efforts were undertaken to mitigate this bias, but it could not be completely eliminated. Third, the temporal dimension of the study was synchronous, thus failing to capture longitudinal changes in community capacity for independence and empowerment resulting from Islamic education interventions. Longer-term studies with longitudinal designs are needed to measure the cumulative impact of Islamic education on community empowerment trajectories. Fourth, this study did not explicitly measure the differential impact of Islamic education based on gender and age group variables, which in the context of rural communities in Indonesia can produce significantly different empowerment patterns.

Based on the findings and limitations outlined, this study recommends several research and policy agendas to broaden and deepen understanding of the role of Islamic education in community empowerment. At the research level, a multi-site comparative study involving rural Muslim communities in various provinces with diverse sociocultural characteristics is highly recommended. Such research will allow for testing and refining the TPBPI construct in a broader context, while also identifying moderating factors that influence the effectiveness of empowerment pathways. Furthermore, longitudinal research with a mixed-methods design that combines qualitative depth with quantitative inferential strength will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of changes in community empowerment capacity over time. (Husni & Milaturrohmah, 2025) identified that longitudinal approaches in Islamic education research are still very rare, thus offering significant opportunities for scholarly contributions in this field.

At the policy and program development level, this study recommends that local governments and the Ministry of Religious Affairs develop an Islamic education curriculum framework that explicitly integrates self-empowerment and community competencies. The integration of Islamic values and functional skills, as proven effective in Ngali Village, needs to be replicated and developed in mosque- and madrasah-based non-formal education programs in areas with similar characteristics. At the theory development level, further research needs to explore in more depth the relationship between the concept of independence from an Islamic perspective (Lenasari & Ritonga, 2024) and contemporary empowerment theory, particularly in order to build a more solid epistemological foundation for internationally standardized Islamic education studies. Cross-disciplinary collaboration between Islamic education experts, sociologists, and community development experts is also recommended to produce a more comprehensive and applicable empowerment model.

## CONCLUSION

This study can be concluded that it uncovers and analyzes the transformative mechanisms through which Islamic education contributes fundamentally to strengthening the independence and socio-religious empowerment of the community in Ngali Village. Through an intensive qualitative case study approach over twelve months, this study identifies four interconnected transformative pillars: strengthening epistemic capacity based on critical Islamic values, establishing a religious social network that significantly expands social capital, internalizing an Islamic work ethic as a basis for economic independence, and constructing a collective religious identity that strengthens community resilience in the face of external shocks.

This mechanism operates synergistically within the diverse ecosystem of Islamic educational institutions ranging from Islamic boarding schools and madrasas to religious study groups and community study groups, which the researcher theoretically formulates as the Quadrant of Transformative Islamic Education (QTIE). This theoretical contribution not only provides empirical evidence for the development of an inclusive Islamic educational epistemology but also enriches social capital theory through the concept of 'religiously-grounded social capital' which challenges the classical dichotomy between modernity and religiosity, proving that authentically internalized Islamic values are actually the driving force of societal modernization in the most substantive sense, namely increasing human capacity, well-being, and dignity.

Practically, these findings call for a reorientation of empowerment policies and practices that better respect the autonomy and vitality of community-based Islamic educational institutions. Education policies at the national and regional levels need to abandon rigid, uniform approaches and shift to models that accommodate the diversity of local contexts, in order to maintain the pedagogical innovation that is the source of strength for institutions like Ngali Village. Community empowerment programs must position Islamic educational institutions as strategic partners possessing invaluable networks and trust, rather than simply passive beneficiaries. While this research has limitations in terms of generalizability due to its single-case nature, its findings provide a crucial foundation for future multi-site and longitudinal research, particularly those that explicitly examine gender dimensions in greater

depth. Islamic educational institutions in rural areas need to continue to be encouraged to integrate life skills and economic literacy as natural applications of Islamic values, ensuring that religious education remains a liberating force that is relevant and responsive to the increasingly complex challenges of our time.

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