MODERNIZING MOUNTAIN EDUCATION: ESTABLISHING A TECHNOLOGY-BASED ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL TO ENHANCE LEARNING QUALITY

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Abstract: *Education is the cornerstone of national development; however, access to education in remote areas of Indonesia remains limited. Pondok Pesantren (Islamic Boarding Schools), as long-established Islamic educational institutions, hold significant potential in addressing this disparity, particularly in hard-to-reach mountainous regions. This article examines the role of Pondok Pesantren Al Fatih As Syafii in empowering education in remote areas through the integration of technology. By utilizing technology, Islamic boarding schools can enhance the quality of education, reduce disparities, and expand access to information for students. Beyond education, these institutions also function as centers for social and economic development, nurturing the character and skills of students. The appropriate application of technology can strengthen Pondok Pesantren's role in preparing a more competitive generation for the digital age. This research contributes to understanding how Pondok Pesantren can serve as key drivers in bridging the educational gap in remote areas and promoting a more inclusive, technology-enhanced learning environment.*

Keywords: *Education; Islamic Boarding School; Modernization; Technology.*

INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a fundamental cornerstone in the development of a nation. However, there remains a significant disparity in access to education between urban and remote rural areas in Indonesia. Limited infrastructure, inadequate road access, a shortage of qualified teachers, and insufficient learning resources are the primary obstacles to achieving equitable education in these remote regions[1,2,3]. These challenges exacerbate the educational quality gap between urban and rural areas. Islamic boarding schools, or pondok pesantren, stand as one of Indonesia's most long-

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[1] Fernando Ferri, Patrizia Grifoni, and Tiziana Guzzo, 'Online Learning and Emergency Remote Teaching: Opportunities and Challenges in Emergency Situations', *Societies*, 10.4 (2020), 1–18 <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc10040086>.

[2] Saga Stenman and Fanny Pettersson, 'Remote Teaching for Equal and Inclusive Education in Rural Areas? An Analysis of Teachers' Perspectives on Remote Teaching', *The International Journal of Information and Learning Technology*, 37.3 (2020), 87–98 <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJILT-10-2019-0096>.

[3] Pierre Du Plessis and Raj Mestry, 'Teachers for Rural Schools–a Challenge for South Africa', *South African Journal of Education*, 39.9 (2019), 1–9 <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v39ns1a1774>.

standing educational institutions and hold immense potential to contribute to equitable education in remote regions. With a holistic approach, pesantren offers not only religious education but also general education tailored to the needs of local communities. However, the main challenges faced by pesantren in remote areas include limited access to technology and underdeveloped road infrastructure, which hinders mobility and connectivity[4,5,6].

The term "education" is undoubtedly familiar to us all, and technology is often understood as electronic tools. From the perspective of philosophers and scientists, technology is defined as methods or tools capable of solving problems more efficiently and practically. It can be concluded that educational technology encompasses all efforts that facilitate the resolution of human challenges. Technology in education is not only limited to software but also involves active participation by learners. Furthermore, technology supports the learning process through strategies that actively develop cognitive skills and critical thinking abilities[7].

The use of technology in education has been shown to significantly improve the quality and effectiveness of learning by incorporating technology, Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) in remote areas can overcome geographical and resource limitations while improving access to broader information and educational materials. Therefore, the establishment of a technology-based Islamic boarding school serves as a strategic solution to improving the standard of education in rural regions.

Education is the primary foundation for building an advanced and competitive civilization. However, not all regions in Indonesia have equal access to quality education. In mountainous regions, in particular, education is often neglected due to geographical challenges, limited infrastructure, inadequate facilities, and scarce human resources. As a result, many children in these remote areas struggle to receive proper, let alone high-quality, education. Islamic boarding schools, with their emphasis on Islamic education, cultivate individuals who embody inner peace, sharp intellect, physical resilience, and a commitment to doing good deeds[8].

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[4] Fepi Febianti, Arip Rahman Sudrajat, and Dhesti Widya Nurhasanah Ningrum, 'Factors Inhibiting Communication in Empowering Farming Communities by the Department of Agriculture and Food Security of Sumedang', *Khazanah Sosial*, 6.4 (2024), 743–54 <https://doi.org/10.15575/ks.v6i4.17526>.

[5] Lucky Nugroho and Syed Lutful Kabir Chowdhury, 'Mobile Banking for Empowerment Muslim Women Entrepreneur: Evidence from Asia (Indonesia and Bangladesh)', *Tazkia Islamic Finance and Business Review*, 9.1 (2015), 83–100 <https://doi.org/10.30993/tifbr.v9i1.79>.

[6] Kikue Hamayotsu, 'The Limits of Civil Society in Democratic Indonesia: Media Freedom and Religious Intolerance', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 43.4 (2013), 658–77 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2013.780471>.

[7] Rahmalia Syifa Miasari and others, 'Teknologi Pendidikan Sebagai Jembatan Reformasi Pembelajaran Di Indonesia Lebih Maju', *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Al Hadi*, 2.1 (2022), 53–61 <https://doi.org/10.31602/jmpd.v2i1.6390>.

[8] Radiansyah Radiansyah and others, 'Manfaat Pendidikan Islam', *Jurnal Dirosah Islamiyah*, 5.2 (2023), 338–47 <https://doi.org/10.17467/jdi.v5i2.3237>.

Recognizing this reality, the researcher was motivated to establish an educational institution based on the pesantren model, focusing on the development of advanced education. This institution aims to address the educational limitations in mountainous areas, particularly in GrunggunganBandilan, Prajekan of Bondowoso, with the hope of nurturing a generation that is intelligent, morally upright, and globally competitive. The pesantren model was chosen because it not only provides academic knowledge but also instills strong religious values, shaping superior character and ethics. Through this educational institution, the researcher hopes to provide access to quality education for children in mountainous areas who have long been overlooked.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study adopts a Case-Based Research (CBR) approach[9,10] to deeply explore the case of Pondok Pesantren Al Fatih As Syafii in Grunggungan, Bondowoso. This approach is chosen to comprehensively investigate how the boarding school serves as a model educational solution in remote areas facing geographical, social, and economic challenges. Through this approach, the study aims to provide a holistic understanding that can be referenced for similar contexts elsewhere.

Research Location and Subjects

The study was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al Fatih As Syafii, located in Grunggungan Village, Bondowoso Regency, East Java. The research subjects include:

1. Boarding school leaders and administrators to obtain data on their vision, mission, and educational programs.
2. Teachers and educators need to understand the teaching methods applied.
3. Students and the surrounding community to assess the social and educational impact of the boarding school.

Data Collection Techniques

1. In-depth Interviews

    Interviews were conducted with boarding school leaders, teachers, students, and local community figures to uncover their experiences, challenges, and innovations implemented by

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[9] Neşet Berkay Doğan and others, 'Predicting the Cost Outcome of Construction Quality Problems Using Case-Based Reasoning (CBR)', *Buildings*, 12.11 (2022), 1–24 <https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings12111946>.

[10] Xin Hu and others, 'The Application of Case-Based Reasoning in Construction Management Research: An Overview', *Automation in Construction*, 72.2 (2016), 65–74 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.autcon.2016.08.023>.

the school in addressing educational issues.

2. Direct Observation

    The researchers directly observed teaching activities, educational facilities, and interactions between the boarding school and the surrounding community. The observation also included the village's geographical conditions and infrastructure.

3. Documentation

    Documentation involved collecting the boarding school's archives, activity reports, work programs, photographs, and other relevant documents.

4. Literature Review

    This study was also supported by a literature review related to education in remote areas, the role of Islamic boarding schools as educational centers, and their relevance to national education policies.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns, relationships, and key findings within the case study. The analysis process involved:

1. Data Reduction
2. Collected data were selected to filter out relevant information.
3. Data Presentation
4. Data were organized into narratives, tables, and thematic categories for easier analysis.
5. Drawing Conclusions
6. Conclusions were drawn based on the analysis while ensuring data validity and reliability.

Validity and Reliability

Triangulation was done by comparing information from observations, interviews, and documentation to guarantee the research's authenticity and dependability. Additionally, the analysis results were verified with the research subjects to confirm accuracy and reliability.

Research Limitations

This study focuses solely on Pondok Pesantren Al Fatih As Syafii as a case study. While the findings may not be fully generalizable, they provide valuable insights and recommendations that can be adapted to other contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education serves as a vital driver in shaping the social and economic progress of a society. However, not all regions in Indonesia have adequate access to educational facilities, especially in remote mountainous areas. Limited infrastructure, long distances, and low accessibility often become barriers for mountain communities to obtain proper education. Additionally, the lack of teachers with the necessary competence and discipline to consistently teach every day and arrive on time further exacerbates the situation. In such conditions, Pondok Pesantren Al Fatih As Syafii Grunggungan emerges as an effective alternative solution to bridge the educational gap in the mountainous region of Grunggungan, Bondowoso, Indonesia.

Pondok Pesantren is an Islamic educational institution with a long history in Indonesia. It is known for its boarding system, which emphasizes religious learning, general education, and character development. The distance between residents' homes and educational institutions makes this pesantren model particularly suitable for the Grunggungan region. With the boarding system, students live and study in an integrated environment, reducing transportation issues and long distances that are major obstacles in mountainous areas. Pondok Pesantren also has a strong cultural presence in the community, offering an educational institution model that can work in collaboration with leadership, teachers, parents, and the community, ensuring the sustainability of the pesantren itself[11]. For this reason, the researcher took the initiative to establish an educational institution based on the Pondok Pesantren system in GrunggunganBandilanPrajekan, Bondowoso Regency, East Java, Indonesia, which is now actively working to develop and improve the quality of education for the mountain communities of Grunggungan.

Pondok Pesantren Al Fatih As Syafii not only functions as an educational institution but also as a center of civilization, a hub for social and spiritual development for the community. It allows Pondok Pesantren Al Fatih As Syafii to serve as a stronghold for reinforcing religious values, ethics, and morals that are needed by mountain communities, which are often isolated from urban cultural developments. Pondok Pesantren is another type of educational institution that has been established for centuries in Indonesia, becoming an integral part of and deeply embedded in the nation's history and society[12].

One of the biggest challenges in mountainous areas is the limited human resources (HR) and access to formal education, both due to the long distances and the lack of infrastructure such as roads and school facilities. Pondok Pesantren Al Fatih As Syafii is able to overcome these

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[11]Agung Wijaksono and Taufik Rizki Sista, 'Kultur Pesantren: Backround Kyai, Output Santri, Dan Marketable Pesantren', *Shibghoh: Prosiding Ilmu Kependidikan UNIDA Gontor*, 1 (2023), 182–86.

[12]Imam Mustofa, 'Menjadikan Pesantren Sebagai Pusat Peradaban Muslim Di Indonesia', *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, 11.1 (2011), 75–108 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol11.iss1.art4>.

challenges because it can operate independently within the community, providing an integrated learning environment. Pondok Pesantren is also more flexible in terms of its curriculum, allowing for adaptation to the needs of the local community, especially in teaching practical skills that are relevant to the daily lives of mountain communities, such as religious studies, general education, as well as agriculture, animal husbandry, and entrepreneurial skills[13].

In addition, the pesantren offers relatively affordable education fees, and PondokPesantren Al Fatih AsSyafii even provides free or subsidized education for underprivileged children, as well as daily scholarships for orphans. As a newly established educational institution that prioritizes discipline, religious education, general education, and technology, PondokPesantren Al Fatih As Syafii has become the primary choice for residents in Grunggungan, offering a new hope for the community to ensure their children receive quality education and discipline, which is hard to find in other nearby schools.

In this digital era, PondokPesantren Al Fatih As Syafii is also making efforts to adapt to technological developments to enhance the quality of education. Schools in mountainous areas rarely utilize technology in their teaching and learning processes. Still, Pondok Pesantren Al Fatih AsSyafii stands out as an educational institution that provides adequate technology, including computer-based learning and the use of LCD projectors in teaching activities. It helps the students broaden their horizons, not only in religious studies but also in general knowledge, which is necessary to compete in the modern world.

More than just an educational institution, PondokPesantren Al Fatih AsSyafii also plays a role in the economic and social empowerment of the surrounding community. In many mountainous areas, Pondok Pesantren has become a center of economic activity by empowering the community through various skills programs, agriculture, and small businesses. The pesantren teaches independence to the students by involving them in productive activities, such as managing agricultural land, animal husbandry, or developing local crafts. It provides significant added value to the community, helping to reduce poverty and fostering long-term community-based economic development for the future.

Character building through discipline

Discipline is a person's obedience to rules driven by the awareness of their conscience[14]. Discipline is one of the key elements in shaping students' character. Through the application of

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[13]Ilzamudin Ma'mur and Utami Syifa Masfu'ah, 'Transformasi Pondok Pesantren Dalam Meningkatkan Motivasi Belajar Siswa Putus Sekolah', *TADBIR MUWAHHID*, 7.2 (2023), 353–79 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30997/jtm.v7i2.10670>.

[14]Deci Nansi and Fajar Tri Utami, 'Hubungan Antara Regulasi Emosi Dengan Perilaku Disiplin Santri Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Qodratullah Langkan', *Psikis: Jurnal Psikologi Islami*, 2.1 (2016)

discipline, students are taught to value time, adhere to rules, and take responsibility for their actions. Discipline does not only mean following the rules set by the school or teachers but also forming good habits that support the development of positive character. When students are educated to be disciplined, they learn to manage themselves. They develop organized life habits, such as completing tasks on time, following class rules, and maintaining a conducive learning environment. All of this helps them develop important life skills, such as perseverance, patience, and responsibility.

Discipline also teaches students to take responsibility for their actions. In a disciplined educational system, students are taught to understand the consequences of every action they take. For example, if a student fails to complete an assignment or breaks a school rule, they will face appropriate consequences. It helps students understand that every action has an impact, whether positive or negative. Honesty is also an important aspect that is shaped through disciplined education. Students interact with various peers, including those who are older or younger, which is why education that emphasizes honesty becomes very effective when taught directly by teachers. Teachers should have high ideals when it comes to teaching and setting an example of honesty in school education[15].

When students are taught to be disciplined, they learn to be honest with themselves and others. This honesty is crucial in shaping a strong character, as honest students are more likely to be trusted and respected by others. Discipline not only applies to physical actions but also encompasses emotional discipline. Emotionally disciplined students are able to control their emotions well, allowing them to handle difficult situations without being easily provoked. They learn to remain calm under pressure, think rationally, and find the right solutions. In the long run, this emotional discipline helps students become more mature individuals who are able to make wise decisions. They are also better at working with others and building healthy relationships both inside and outside the school environment.

Disciplinary education also plays a crucial role in preparing students to face future challenges. The world of work and societal life demands individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also possess strong character, resilience, and noble morals. The discipline taught in schools helps students develop these qualities, making them better prepared to adapt and succeed in the real world. Rules and regulations in learning must be enforced, and sometimes punishment is necessary. However, on the other hand, students should also be given the freedom to express their

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<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.19109/psikis.v2i1.1054>.

[15]Muhammad Amin, 'Peran Guru Dalam Menanamkan Nilai Kejujuran Pada Lembaga Pendidikan', *TADBIR: Jurnal Studi Manajemen Pendidikan*, 1.1 (2017), 105–24 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.29240/jsmp.v1i1.222>.

opinions, determine their stance, and formulate the best rules for themselves in the learning process[16].

An important aspect of developing discipline in this digital era is raising awareness about the responsible use of technology. Therefore, we are holding a seminar on National Santri Day to increase awareness among santri about discipline and etiquette in using digital technology, as well as emphasize the importance of digital technology in daily life. The wise use of technology not only reflects discipline but also supports the development of better character, which is in line with the values taught at pesantren.

Figure 1. A mini-seminar on the importance of digital literacy and maintaining proper etiquette in the use of technology (published by the researcher at https://alfasyafi.or.id/pp-al-fatih-as-syafii-adakan-seminar-dengan-tema-santri-era-digital/).

It is important to note that the implementation of discipline in education must be carried out with the right approach. Teachers and schools play a significant role in instilling discipline in students. However, the approach taken must be based on compassion and understanding, not harsh or oppressive punishment. Good discipline is the kind that builds where students feel supported to learn from their mistakes and grow into better individuals. Teachers must set a good

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[16]Rasyid Anwar Dalimunthe, 'Kedisiplinan Belajar Pesantren', *Al-Fikru: Jurnal Ilmiah*, 13.2 (2019), 112–18 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.51672/alfikru.v13i2.14>.

example of discipline, as students tend to imitate the behavior they see. Schools also need to create an environment that consistently supports the application of discipline, both inside and outside the classroom.

The Implementation of Technology in Remote Mountainous

The application of technology in the pesantren education system can open doors for more interactive and efficient learning. The environment at Pondok Pesantren Al Fatih AsSyafii is one where internet signals are difficult to access. Still, the installation of a wired Wi-Fi network has facilitated various teaching and learning programs. With internet access and digital devices such as computers or laptops, along with an LCD projector, the students can utilize modern learning materials, such as e-books, instructional videos, and online platforms. These facilities and infrastructure are common in educational institutions in cities, but they are still considered extraordinary for educational institutions located in remote mountainous areas. It enables them to learn many things from various sources that might not be available in the isolated pesantren environment. It is in line with Jaka Warsihna's opinion in his journal article that the essence of educational technology is an effective and efficient solution to educational problems[17].

With the implementation of technology, students studying at PondokPesantren Al Fatih AsSyafii, even though located in a remote mountainous area, still have the opportunity to develop digital literacy. It is important to prepare them to face an increasingly digital world. Tech-savvy students will be better prepared to compete in the job market and possess skills that are relevant to the changing times. The application of technology at PondokPesantren Al Fatih AsSyafii in the Grunggungan mountainous region provides various opportunities to enhance the standard of education and administration efficiency. However, challenges such as limited infrastructure, costs, and human resources must be addressed through collaboration with various parties and the use of appropriate technology. With technology, pesantren in remote areas can develop better, equip students with relevant skills, and strengthen their networks with the outside world[18].

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[17]Jaka Warsihna Jaka Warsihna, 'Pemanfaatan Teknologi Informasi Dan Komunikasi (Tik) Untuk Pendidikan Daerah Terpencil, Tertinggal Dan Terdepan (3T)', *Jurnal Teknodik*, 17.2 (2013), 235–45 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32550/teknodik.v0i0.82>.

[18]Allan Yarrow and others, 'Teaching in Rural and Remote Schools: A Literature Review', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 15.1 (1999), 1–13 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(98)00036-5>.

Figure 2. Despite being located in a mountainous and remote area with limited signal access, Pondok Pesantren Al-Fatih As-Syafi'i has its own regularly updated website.

Social and Educational Benefits for Mountain Communities

Communities living in mountainous areas often face unique challenges, such as limited access to resources and facilities. However, with good education and social engagement, mountain communities can experience significant improvements in their quality of life. With quality education, residents in mountainous areas have greater access to economic opportunities, both within and outside their region. Education opens doors for the community to secure better jobs, whether in the formal or informal sectors. For example, they can become teachers, craftsmen, or even entrepreneurs who sell mountain products.

Quality education received by children from underprivileged families today will shape a more skilled and productive generation for the future. While breaking the cycle of poverty is not the primary goal of education, social inequality is often the main cause of the poverty cycle that is difficult to break. By providing access to quality education for underprivileged children, we can help them break the chains of poverty that have bound their families' lives[19].

Educated communities tend to have a higher awareness of the importance of preserving the environment. It is particularly important in mountainous areas that are rich in natural resources but also vulnerable to environmental damage due to unsustainable practices, especially since PondokPesantren Al Fatih AsSyafii is located near a protected forest. Education can teach the community how to conserve natural resources, such as forests and springs, which are vital for their survival.

In addition to education, social involvement and solidarity among mountain communities also provide various benefits. A good social life can enhance a sense of togetherness, cooperation,

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[19]I Ketut Sukarma and others, 'Mengurangi Ketimpangan Sosial Melalui Program Bantuan Pendidikan Bagi Anak-Anak Kurang Mampu', *Community Development Journal: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 4.4 (2023), 8440–47 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31004/cdj.v4i4.19682>.

and the community's resilience in facing various challenges. Mountain communities typically have strong social bonds. This social solidarity is important because it creates a support network that helps them face challenges together. For example, in dealing with natural disasters or difficult times, cooperation and collaboration become crucial elements that support the survival of the community. Social activities, such as community meetings, religious activities, and cultural events, help empower the community. These activities provide a space for people to share experiences, build better social relationships, and solve problems together. They also give the community an opportunity to voice their aspirations and bring about positive change.

Education and social interaction within mountain communities are inseparable. They support and strengthen each other. Educated communities tend to be more socially active and able to make positive contributions to their communities. Conversely, communities with strong social ties are more likely to embrace education as part of improving their well-being. Interaction is considered important to maintain and even protect, as good social interaction can alter behavior, meaning, and language. In other words, through interaction, an individual can quickly and effortlessly grasp their desires[20].
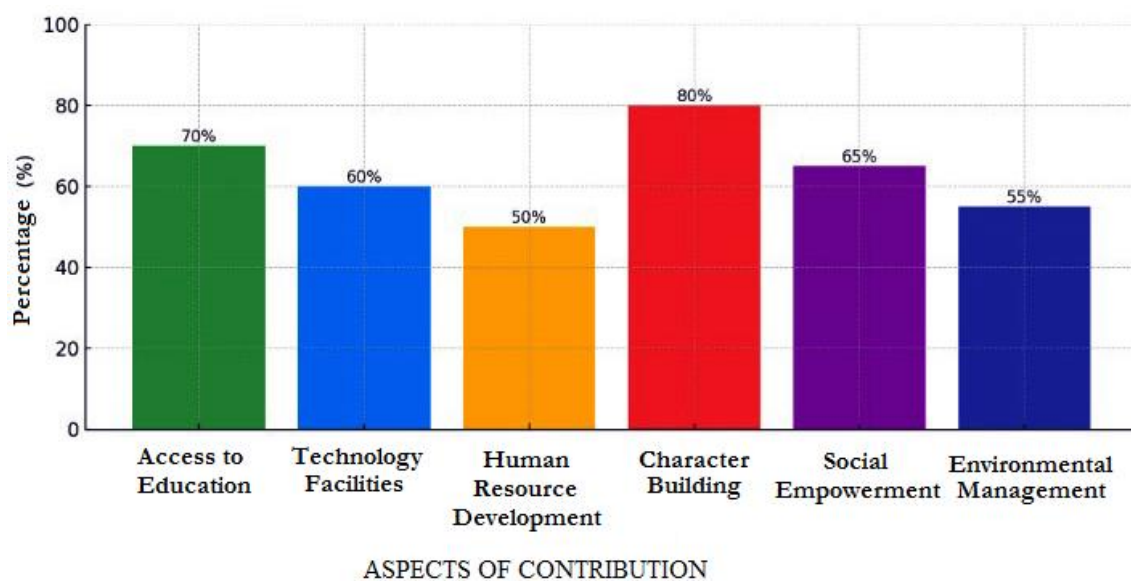

Figure 3. The Contribution of Pondok Pesantren Al Fatih As Syafii in Remote Mountainous Areas

This chart shows that Pondok Pesantren Al Fatih As Syafii not only functions as an educational institution but also as a holistic social change agent. Its contributions go beyond

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[20]Lalu Moh Fahri and Lalu A Hery Qusyairi, 'Interaksi Sosial Dalam Proses Pembelajaran', *Palapa*, 7.1 (2019), 149–66 <https://doi.org/10.36088/palapa.v7i1.194>.

education, involving economic empowerment, the application of technology, and the fostering of social solidarity. With an integrative approach, this pesantren provides effective solutions to address the educational and social disparities in the mountainous region[21]. It also emphasizes that education and social interaction are vital in enhancing the quality of life in mountain communities. Through education, individuals can acquire knowledge and skills that help them overcome life's challenges. Meanwhile, strong social connections help maintain solidarity, preserve local culture, expand networks, and enhance the emotional well-being of the community. Therefore, education and social interaction must continue to be encouraged and strengthened to create a prosperous, competitive, and self-reliant mountain society.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Pesantren education in mountainous areas, particularly at Pondok Pesantren Al Fatih AsSyafii, faces geographical and accessibility challenges. However, with the high dedication of educators, this pesantren has successfully created a high-quality educational environment, focusing on the development of religious, moral, and intellectual aspects of the students. This success is also supported by the educators' ability to implement a multidisciplinary and adaptive approach, which includes religious studies, foreign languages, technology, and practical skills. Challenges such as limited facilities and lack of resources have been overcome through cooperation and local innovation. The individualized approach to teaching students has become a major strength, creating a familial environment that nurtures the overall development of the students. The impact of this pesantren in improving education in remote areas is highly meaningful, demonstrating that quality education is achievable not just in major cities but also in rural and distant regions.

Suggestions

Infrastructure Development: To support a better educational process, the pesantren should collaborate with the government or private sectors to improve infrastructure, including road access, information technology, and adequate educational facilities. Continuous Teacher Training: Educators at this pesantren need to receive ongoing training and capacity development, especially in the fields of educational technology and modern teaching methods, to provide more dynamic and relevant education in line with current developments. Diversification of Educational Programs:

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[21]Joyce L Epstein and Mavis G Sanders, 'Family, School, and Community Partnerships', in *Handbook of Parenting Volume 5 Practical Issues in Parenting*, ed. by Marc H. Bornstein;Bill Webber, 5th edn (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), CDVI, 407–37.

Expanding the curriculum by adding programs focused on entrepreneurship, technology, and modern science can help students better prepare for challenges outside the pesantren, both in the workforce and in broader social environments. <u>Collaboration with Other Institutions:</u> Building partnerships with universities, educational institutions, and government agencies will open greater opportunities for students to continue their education at higher levels and give them access to more learning resources.

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