



## THE ROLE OF UMMI KALSUM ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN GUNUNGSITOLI

Mawaddah<sup>1</sup>, Azizah Hanum OK<sup>2</sup>, Yusnaili Budianti<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

### Article Info

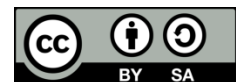
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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the social condition of Islamic education in Gunungsitoli, the contribution of the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School in Islamic Education in Gunungsitoli, and the involvement of alumni of the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School in the development of Islamic and social education in Gunungsitoli. The method used in this study is a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Data collection techniques with observation, interviews, and document studies. The results of the research in this thesis first; highlight that the development of Islamic education in Gunungsitoli is not as fast as in areas with a majority Muslim population. The main factor influencing this is Gunungsitoli's status as an area with a minority Muslim population, which makes Islamic education have to compete with other education systems that may be more dominant. In this context, the biggest challenge is how to increase the attractiveness of Islamic education in the midst of the diversity of society. Second; the contribution of the pesantren extends to the surrounding community through various service activities. Pesantren actively organizes programs such as religious counseling, social service skills training, and community-based economic empowerment activities. These activities are designed to provide real benefits to the community, while strengthening the role of pesantren as a center for the development of the people. Third; the contribution of alumni who return to Gunungsitoli to teach, become religious leaders, and support the construction of Islamic boarding schools. Alumni of the pesantren function as a liaison that strengthens the social network between the pesantren and the community.

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### Corresponding Author:

Mawaddah  
Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia  
Email: [wamawaddah1@gmail.com](mailto:wamawaddah1@gmail.com)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a crucial tool in shaping a nation's civilization. From an Islamic perspective, education is not only understood as a process of transferring knowledge, but also as an effort to develop noble morals, faith, and life skills relevant to the demands of the times. Islamic boarding schools (Pesantren) are the oldest Islamic educational institutions and play a significant role in fostering the community. Their existence not only serves as centers of religious instruction but also as moral, social, and even political strongholds throughout the nation's history. With their unique systems, Islamic boarding schools have established traditions of scholarship, independence, and social sensitivity that have kept them relevant into the modern

era (Ritonga et al., 2024). They are also the most consistent Islamic educational institutions in upholding religious values amidst social change (Sikumbang et al., 2024).

The existence of Islamic boarding schools is even more strategic when placed within the context of a Muslim minority community. Gunungsitoli City, the center of government on Nias Island, has a predominantly Christian population. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2020 shows the population of Gunungsitoli City was 136,017, with only around 21,979 Muslims, or 16.2% of the total population (BPS Gunungsitoli City, 2020). Furthermore, the most recent data from 2023 recorded a population of 137,924, with 18,332 Muslims, or approximately 13.3% (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2023). This situation emphasizes that Muslims in Gunungsitoli are a quantitative minority, making the existence of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) crucial.

Similarly, education is dominated by general formal education rather than formal Islamic education. Despite being a minority, the Muslim community in Gunungsitoli has been active in advancing Islamic education in the region. This is due to the awareness that in this situation, Islamic educational institutions have the opportunity to become agents of social change and unify the community. One example is the establishment of an Islamic boarding school in Gunungsitoli.

The Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School was established in 1998 on Jalan Pesantren, Mudik Village, Gunungsitoli Market, Gunungsitoli District, Gunungsitoli City, North Sumatra 228152. It is the only Islamic boarding school in the heart of Gunungsitoli City. The presence of the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School provides a significant opportunity for the Gunungsitoli community, especially for young women who wish to continuously gain knowledge and develop spiritual and religious values.

The Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School plays a significant role in Islamic education in Gunungsitoli. It is the primary educational institution providing Islamic religious understanding to its students. Through the teaching of the Quran, hadith, fiqh, and other religious sciences, this Islamic boarding school helps maintain and develop Islamic scholarship in the Gunungsitoli region.

With its broad and profound role in Islamic education and community development, the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School plays a crucial role in strengthening the religious and moral foundations of Gunungsitoli. In addition to religious instruction, the Islamic boarding school also focuses on developing the morals of its students. They are taught to become pious, honest, disciplined, and responsible individuals, in accordance with Islamic teachings.

The Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School (PPI) exists as an Islamic educational institution with a strategic role. It serves not only as a center for religious education but also as a cultural stronghold, strengthening the Islamic identity of the Muslim community in Gunungsitoli. Its existence serves as a means of developing Muslim cadres, fostering morals, and providing a space for *da'wah* (Islamic outreach), strengthening the presence of Islam in a region dominated by non-Muslims (Azra, 2012).

The role of the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School can be seen from several aspects. First, the educational aspect, through the integration of religious and general curricula, produces students with broad knowledge. Second, the moral development aspect, through the instilling of discipline, independence, and responsibility. Third, the socio-religious aspect, through religious studies, *da'wah* activities, and community service. Fourth, the cultural aspect, which serves to maintain harmony between religious communities in a pluralistic society (Nata, 2016). Thus, this Islamic boarding school focuses not only on the internal well-being of its students but also makes a tangible contribution to the surrounding community.

However, the challenges faced by the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School are also significant. This Islamic boarding school must maintain Islamic values amidst the dominance of a non-Muslim majority culture, while simultaneously adapting to developments such as globalization, digitalization, and 21st-century competencies. These challenges require Islamic boarding schools to innovate in educational management, learning methods, and *da'wah* strategies to remain relevant to the needs of the community (Abdurrahman, 2018).

Based on this description, research on the role of the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School in the development of Islamic education in Gunungsitoli City is crucial. This research is expected to illustrate the contribution of Islamic boarding schools in fostering Islamic education among minority communities, identify development strategies, and identify challenges and opportunities faced. Thus, the results of this study will not only provide academic contributions but also practical implications in strengthening the role of Islamic boarding schools in Muslim minority areas.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological approach. This research was used to solve or provide answers to the problem being studied. The results were then presented descriptively.

Qualitative research is based on the philosophy of postpositivity, used to examine natural conditions of objects, with the researcher as the key instrument (Sugiyono, 2010). To obtain research data that reflected the conditions of the research subjects and could illustrate (answer) the research objectives and problems, the researcher selected all informants for this study using purposive sampling. This technique includes individuals selected based on specific criteria established by the researcher based on the research objectives. (Moleong et al., 2004) Participants in this study were:

- 1) Head of the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School Foundation, Gunungsitoli (Informant 1)
- 2) Teacher at Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School (Informant 2)
- 3) Principal of Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School (Informant 3)
- 4) Community Leader (Informant 4)
- 5) Alumni of Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School (Informant 5)
- 6) Students at Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School (Informant 6)

Observations in this study focused on the social conditions of Islamic education in Gunungsitoli City, particularly how religious activities and Islamic learning take place in the midst of a Muslim minority community. Researchers observed religious activities such as religious studies, learning the Qur'an at TPQ, congregational prayers at the mosque, and community participation in various Islamic activities. In addition, the social atmosphere and interactions between religious communities were also observed to see the application of Islamic values in daily life.

In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with various parties who were considered to have relevant information regarding the role of the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School in the development of Islamic education in Gunungsitoli. Research informants consisted of the head of the Islamic boarding school foundation, the head of the madrasah, ustadz and ustadzah teaching, as well as students who had studied at least two years at the Islamic boarding school. In addition, interviews were also conducted with alumni who had been active in the community, and community leaders. The selection of informants was carried out purposively, namely by selecting people who were considered to be most knowledgeable and directly involved in the activities of the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School, especially those related to the contribution of the Islamic boarding school in the field of Islamic education.

### 3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

#### **Social Conditions of Islamic Education in Gunungsitoli**

Islamic education in Gunungsitoli City currently faces several complex challenges. One major issue is the declining public interest in sending their children to Islamic educational institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). This situation indicates that the public still views general education as more promising economically and career-wise than religious-based education. However, the two types of education can actually complement each other. Islamic education excels in developing strong character and morals, while general education provides practical insights and technical skills needed in the modern world. Therefore, synergy between Islamic and general educational institutions is key to improving the quality of education in Gunungsitoli to make it more inclusive, relevant, and competitive.

In the context of a minority region like Gunungsitoli, Islamic boarding schools hold a strategic position as centers of moral development and symbols of the Muslim community. Hefner (2009) stated that Islamic boarding schools function not only as religious educational institutions but also as symbols of Islamic values within a diverse society. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools need to develop a community-based approach, for example by engaging in social activities such as skills training, health education, or economic empowerment. This approach strengthens the relationship between Islamic boarding schools and the surrounding community and increases social acceptance of Islamic institutions (Abdullah, 2007).

Furthermore, Dalimunthe et al (2003) emphasized that Islamic boarding schools need to integrate religious curricula with general knowledge to be more adaptive to current needs. Training programs in technology, entrepreneurship, and modern skills can expand opportunities for Islamic boarding school graduates in the workforce. This makes Islamic boarding schools not only centers of spiritual education but also institutions for economic community empowerment. Alumni involvement is also a crucial factor. Fauzan et al (2023) emphasized that alumni networks can play a role in strengthening the relationship between Islamic boarding schools and the wider community through contributions of manpower, finances, and innovative ideas.

Islamic boarding schools in minority areas need to prioritize da'wah based on tolerance and welcoming Islamic values. Julaiha (2014) explained that Islamic education should be able to create social harmony in a pluralistic society. An inclusive da'wah approach not only improves the image of Islam in the eyes of non-Muslim communities but also strengthens the position of Islamic boarding schools as institutions relevant to all groups.

With these strategies, Islamic boarding schools in Gunungsitoli have a significant opportunity to continue growing despite social and economic challenges. They can function as centers of education, preaching, and community empowerment, actively contributing to the formation of a generation with noble character and competence in modern life. With synergistic support from the community, government, and other educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools are expected to demonstrate their relevance as a key pillar for the development of Islamic education in minority areas like Gunungsitoli.

### **The Contribution of the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School to Islamic Education in Gunungsitoli**

Through its various activities, the Islamic boarding school is not only an educational institution but also a driving force in improving the overall quality of Islamic education in Gunungsitoli. This reflects the strategic role of the Islamic boarding school as a center for educational empowerment and learning oriented towards the development of the Muslim community in the region. The Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School in Gunungsitoli is an Islamic educational institution that offers a holistic approach to the development of its students.

This research focuses on analyzing the educational programs offered by the Islamic boarding school, which encompass religious education, formal education, and life skills. The Islamic boarding school provides not only religious learning such as Quran memorization, study of yellow books, and Arabic debates, but also practical skills training, such as farming, entrepreneurship, and simple technology. This approach is designed to produce students who are not only strong in religious understanding but also prepared to face social and economic challenges outside the Islamic boarding school environment. The results of this study aim to identify the strategic role of Islamic boarding school educational programs in shaping a generation that is religious, independent, and able to actively contribute to society.

The Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School implements an educational approach based on the integration of religious and general knowledge, reflecting the principles of integrated education. This approach aligns with the thinking of Al-Attas (1978), who emphasized that Islamic education ideally combines elements of worldly and hereafter knowledge to create individuals with a balance of intellectual and spiritual intelligence. At the formal level, the management of the junior and senior high schools at this Islamic boarding school implements a curriculum that not only teaches religious subjects such as tafsir, hadith, and fiqh, but also general subjects such as mathematics, science, and English. This curriculum aims to equip students with a solid spiritual foundation and intellectual competencies relevant to the needs of the modern era.

This Islamic boarding school also offers non-formal programs designed to deepen religious understanding and life skills. Quran memorization programs, tafsir studies, and Islamic arts such as calligraphy and qasidah (recitation of the Quran) provide students with a profound spiritual dimension, as Halstead (2004) suggests, suggesting that Islamic education must be able to respond to the challenges of the times without losing its identity and Islamic values. Practical skills training, such as in agriculture and entrepreneurship, reflects the principle of empowerment in Islamic education, as explained by Mas'ud (2002), where skills-based education supports students' independence in navigating socio-economic dynamics. This Islamic boarding school provides extracurricular programs that integrate intellectual, spiritual, and practical development. Activities such as Arabic debates and entrepreneurship training provide students with opportunities to hone their critical thinking, communication, and business management skills (Mahdayeni et al., 2019). This aligns with Muhaimin's (2011) view that modern Islamic education should be a platform for developing 21st-century skills, including critical thinking and adaptability.

The holistic approach implemented by the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School reflects a dynamic and progressive paradigm of Islamic education. This Islamic boarding school integrates traditional Islamic values with the demands of globalization, making it a relevant model for further study. This integrated education has the potential to shape a multidimensionally superior generation, as emphasized in the concept of the *insan kamil* (complete human being) by Al-Attas (1993), namely individuals capable of actualizing their spiritual, intellectual, and practical potential in their lives.

The Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School plays a strategic role in increasing public interest in quality Islamic education through the implementation of holistic and relevant programs. This Islamic boarding school not only offers formal education at the junior and senior high school levels but also combines in-depth religious instruction with practical worldly skills. The curriculum, which includes religious subjects such as Quran memorization, the study of yellow books, and interpretation, combined with general subjects such as science and English, illustrates that Islamic education at this Islamic boarding school is not only traditional, but also progressive and adaptive to the needs of the times. Life skills training programs, such as farming, sewing, simple technology, and entrepreneurship, demonstrate the Islamic boarding school's

commitment to preparing students to be independent and competitive. This approach aligns with Mas'ud's (2002) view on education for empowerment, which emphasizes that Islamic education must be oriented towards empowering individuals to face socio-economic challenges. Furthermore, extracurricular programs such as calligraphy, Arabic debate, and qasidah provide space for students to develop their creativity, communication skills, and Islamic cultural expression.

This Islamic boarding school has a significant influence in attracting community interest in sending their children to Islamic education, with the success of its alumni being a key factor. The success of its alumni in various fields, such as education, da'wah, and the workplace, demonstrates that the Islamic boarding school is capable of integrating religious education and practical skills, as exemplified by the concept of integrated knowledge-based education described by Fazlur Rahman (1982). According to Rahman, an ideal Islamic education bridges religious and worldly knowledge to shape individuals who are not only religious but also competent in facing the demands of the times.

This activity creates an opportunity to promote the Islamic educational values practiced by the Islamic boarding school while simultaneously building community trust. This aligns with the view of Quraish Shihab (2007), who emphasizes the importance of Islamic education as an agent of societal renewal, continuously innovating and adapting to the needs of its community. By showcasing relevant and impactful programs, the Islamic boarding school can attract community support and active participation. Open activities involving the community also serve as a concrete manifestation of participatory Islamic education, as explained by Paulo Freire (1970) in his concept of education as a practice of freedom. Freire emphasized the importance of dialogue and community involvement in the educational process to foster critical awareness and build mutually beneficial relationships between educational institutions and the community. Thus, Islamic boarding schools serve not only as centers of education for students but also as centers for community empowerment.

### **Involvement of Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School Alumni in the Development of Islamic Education and Social Affairs in Gunungsitoli**

Islamic boarding school alumni play a strategic role in supporting the sustainability of Islamic education, particularly in areas like Gunungsitoli, where Islamic boarding schools play a crucial role as centers of religious learning and community empowerment. Their contributions reflect the implementation of the concept of al-ukhuwah al-islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood), which, according to Azra (2003) in *\*The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia\**, is a key force in maintaining the relevance of Islamic education in modern society.

The role of alumni as religious teachers, ustaz (Islamic teachers), and community leaders demonstrates that Islamic boarding school education focuses not only on spiritual formation but also on producing individuals capable of making real contributions in various sectors. According to Abdullah (2013) in *\*The Dynamics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia\**, Islamic boarding school alumni often become agents of change, bringing Islamic values into various aspects of community life, including education, economics, and social issues.

In addition to their roles as educators, alumni are also active in supporting Islamic boarding school educational facilities through donations. This aligns with Fazlur Rahman's (1982) view in *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, which emphasizes that the sustainability of Islamic education depends heavily on community involvement, including alumni, in ensuring an inclusive and sustainable educational ecosystem.

Alumni involvement in social activities such as skills training and community outreach also reflects the principle of education for empowerment, as proposed by Freire (1970) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Islamic boarding schools, through their alumni, become centers of community empowerment, shaping not only religious individuals but also empowering them socially and economically. Alumni serve as a bridge between the Islamic values taught in the boarding school and the social realities of the community, creating a broad and sustainable impact.

With alumni involvement, Islamic boarding schools not only maintain their relevance but also continue to develop as dynamic educational institutions. As Kuntowijoyo (2006) argues in *\*Paradigma Islam: Interpretation for Action\**, Islamic education has the potential to be an agent of social transformation, and alumni are a key element in realizing this. The continuing role of alumni in supporting Islamic boarding schools ensures that Islamic educational values can continue to be transformed into the next generation, while strengthening Islamic boarding schools as relevant and adaptive institutions in facing the challenges of the times.

The role of alumni in supporting Islamic education in Gunungsitoli not only reflects the success of Islamic boarding schools in producing spiritually competent individuals but also demonstrates the relevance of Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions and community empowerment institutions. Alumni

involvement is a key indicator of the success of the Islamic boarding school-based education model, which focuses on social and spiritual transformation.

The role of alumni of the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School in supporting Islamic education in Gunungsitoli can be explained through a theoretical approach that focuses on the role of Islamic education as an agent of social transformation and community empowerment. Alumni who return to teach or engage in Islamic boarding school activities demonstrate the application of Islamic educational values that shape their character. This aligns with Azra's (2003) view in *Muslim Education and Modernization*, which states that Islamic boarding schools not only produce religiously devout individuals but also produce agents of change who play important roles in society. Alumni involvement in Islamic boarding school activities, such as speaking engagements or assisting in facility construction, reflects the boarding school's function as a center for community-based education. According to research by Halstead (2004) in the *British Journal of Religious Education*, Islamic education has strong elements that support the development of relationships between individuals and communities. Alumni who return to Islamic boarding schools to share experiences and assist in the institution's development demonstrate how Islamic education is oriented not only toward individual achievement but also toward collective benefit.

Alumni's contributions to supporting Islamic boarding schools can be linked to the concept of social capital in Islamic education. Alumni who actively provide material or moral support to Islamic boarding schools not only strengthen the institution but also increase public trust in Islamic education. By demonstrating their success in various fields, alumni serve as concrete evidence of the effectiveness of the Islamic boarding school education system in producing individuals who are relevant to the needs of the times. The presence of alumni who serve as teachers, ustaz (Islamic teachers), or community leaders also demonstrates how Islamic education can produce individuals who wield significant influence in strengthening religious values in local communities. This is reinforced by Hefner (2000) in *\*Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia\**, which highlights the crucial role of Islamic education in shaping a society rooted in spiritual values yet adaptable to modernity.

Alumni of the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School not only represent the success of Islamic education but are also key agents ensuring the school remains relevant and contributes to the social, spiritual, and economic development of the Gunungsitoli community. Their role is concrete evidence of how the boarding school can function as a center of education and empowerment that has a broad impact on the community. The contributions of alumni who return to Gunungsitoli to teach, become religious leaders, and support the development of the boarding school reflect the existence of strong social capital. According to Campbel (2012) in *Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital*, social capital consists of relationships that support the flow of information, norms, and values that strengthen educational institutions. Alumni of the boarding school serve as liaisons, strengthening the social network between the boarding school and the community. By returning to teach and share their knowledge, they not only strengthen Islamic education but also build community trust in the boarding school as a relevant and empowering educational institution (Indainanto et al., 2023).

Islamic education does not end with graduation, but continues throughout life. This is reflected in the involvement of alumni who continue to contribute to Islamic boarding schools. This idea aligns with Fazlur Rahman's (1982) view in *"Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition,"* which states that Islamic education must create individuals who continue to learn and contribute throughout their lives. Alumni forums support this concept by providing a space for alumni to share experiences and fresh ideas, so they remain connected to the Islamic boarding school and continue learning through these interactions. Azizah (2020) argued that social capital is the strength of social relationships that provide collective benefits. In the context of Islamic education, the close relationship between alumni and Islamic boarding schools serves as social capital that strengthens the position of the Islamic boarding school as an institution of education and empowerment. Alumni who actively participate in forums create networks that benefit not only the Islamic boarding school but also the wider community, making Islamic education a center of social transformation.

Islamic boarding school alumni demonstrate that Islamic education has the capacity to produce leaders capable of contributing in various areas of life. Their presence as drivers of social change demonstrates how the Islamic values taught in Islamic boarding schools can be practically applied to bring broader benefits to society. This is concrete evidence that Islamic boarding schools are educational institutions capable of creating a multidimensional impact, not only in the religious realm but also in the social and economic spheres.

## CONCLUSION

A key factor influencing this is Gunungsitoli's status as a region with a Muslim minority population, which forces Islamic education to compete with other, potentially more dominant, educational systems. In this context, the biggest challenge is how to increase the appeal of Islamic education amidst the diversity of the community. The stigma that Islamic education is less relevant to the needs of the workforce is another challenge that influences perceptions within some communities. The contribution of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) is not only evident in the development of human resources within the school environment, but also extends to the surrounding community through various community service activities. Pesantren actively organizes programs such as religious counseling, skills training, social services, and community-based economic empowerment activities. These activities are designed to provide tangible benefits to the community while strengthening the role of pesantren as centers for community development. Alumni return to Gunungsitoli to teach, become religious leaders, and support the development of pesantren. Pesantren alumni serve as liaisons, strengthening the social network between the pesantren and the community. By returning to teach and sharing their knowledge, they not only strengthen Islamic education but also build community trust in the pesantren as relevant and empowering educational institutions. The relationship between the Ummi Kalsum Islamic Boarding School and its alumni not only reflects the success of Islamic education in forming knowledgeable and noble individuals, but also shows how Islamic education can create a community that supports the sustainability and relevance of educational institutions.

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