



**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
(IJEMP)**

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**REVIVING AL-KASB: THE ROLE OF TAHFIZ AND PONDOK
INSTITUTIONS IN CULTIVATING SOCIAL
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

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Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 22.06.2025

Revised date: 17.07.2025

Accepted date: 21.08.2025

Published date: 19.09.2025

To cite this document:

Hamzah, S., Abdul Rahim, M. M., & Adnan, A. A. Z. (2025). Reviving Al-Kasb: The Role of Tahfiz And Pondok Institutions in Cultivating Social Entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Management Practices*, 8 (31), 277-284.

DOI: 10.35631/IJEMP.831018

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Abstract:

In an era of rising demand for ethical and sustainable economic practices, the Islamic concept of Al-Kasb, which emphasizes lawful and ethical earning, has regained scholarly and practical attention. This mini review investigates the potential of Tahfiz and Pondok institutions, two traditional Islamic educational models, in reviving Al-Kasb through the cultivation of social entrepreneurship. Drawing on interdisciplinary studies, the review explores how these institutions, deeply rooted in spiritual education and community engagement, can evolve into catalysts for value-driven enterprise. The discussion centers on three interrelated themes: social impact, institutional environment, and the integration of social entrepreneurship. Findings suggest that these institutions are uniquely positioned to instil Islamic ethical principles within entrepreneurial ventures aimed at community empowerment and sustainable development. However, challenges persist, including limited financial resources, lack of integration with formal systems, and insufficient context-specific models. The review highlights the need for culturally grounded, Shariah-compliant frameworks tailored to the lived realities of these institutions. This paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how traditional Islamic education can intersect with modern social enterprise, reviving Al-Kasb in ways that are both ethically sound and socially impactful.

Keywords:

Al-Kasb, Social Entrepreneurship, Tahfiz and Pondok Institutions, Islamic Education

Introduction

The concept of *Al-Kasb* or ethical earning within Islamic economics has gained renewed relevance as societies seek sustainable and socially responsible economic models. Tahfiz (Qur'an memorization) and Pondok (Islamic boarding schools) institutions, traditionally focused on religious instruction, now emerge as key players in fostering social entrepreneurship rooted in Islamic values (Putra, 2024; Bakhrudin et al., 2024). Deeply embedded in community life, these institutions offer potential platforms for instilling entrepreneurial spirit aligned with social impact and ethical norms (Sabnam & Mamin, 2016). While entrepreneurship education in Islamic higher education is increasingly recognized (Ichsan et al., 2023; Johari et al., 2023), limited integration with traditional religious institutions and lack of Shariah-compliant entrepreneurial frameworks remains a gap. For instance, research at Al-Itqan Islamic Boarding School in Depok illustrates the fusion of *salaf* pesantren education with entrepreneurial development (Shikuku, 2019), showcasing potential for broader adaptation. The role of Islamic social entrepreneurship is increasingly explored as a means of social impact that aligns with Islamic ethical teachings (Hamdy et al., 2025). However, financial limitations, absence of integrated formal education, and digital gaps hinder the scalability of these models (Soleymanpor et al., 2024; Dwi et al., 2025). The practice of *Al-Kasb* in tahfiz and pondok institutions in Selangor is closely related to social entrepreneurship, although they are not entirely the same. *Al-Kasb* is a classical Islamic economic concept based on individual effort to earn a lawful livelihood, whereas social entrepreneurship is a modern concept that emphasizes social impact and community sustainability through economic activities. The following table presents a comparison between the concept of *Al-Kasb* and the concept of social entrepreneurship.

Literature Review

Although social entrepreneurship adopts a modern approach, its core values—such as helping the community, generating lawful income, self-reliance, and creating a positive impact on the *ummah*—are aligned with the principles of *Al-Kasb* (Al-Syaibani, 2009; Yunus, 2010). Many private *tahfiz* and *pondok* institutions today: [a] train students to work and produce goods (*practicing kasb*) (Hassan & Nor, 2018); [b] use the proceeds to support educational needs (*social purpose*) (Salleh, 2020); [c] emphasize sincerity and blessings in earning a livelihood (*Islamic values*) (Rahman et al., 2019). This indicates that *tahfiz* and *pondok* institutions in Selangor have integrated the concept of *Al-Kasb* within the framework of social entrepreneurship (Shafii et al., 2021). For example: Madrasah Tahfiz al-Quran Negeri Kedah runs stingless bee honey and organic farming projects, with the proceeds used to cover student expenses and the operational costs of the *madrasah* (Ismail, 2022). This represents a fusion of *kasb* and social entrepreneurship. Another example, Pondok Darul Falah, Kelantan teaches students tailoring, farming, and how to sell Islamic books they produce themselves. They are not fully dependent on donations but rather on the fruits of their own efforts (*kasb*), which benefit the community (Zakaria & Ahmad, 2021). While the practices of *Al-Kasb* and social

entrepreneurship differ in terminology and approach, they share similar goals and values: generating lawful income, building economic resilience, and benefiting society. Thus, it can be concluded that today's social entrepreneurship is a modern and systematic extension of the *Al-Kasb* principle as outlined by scholars such as Imam al-Syaibani (Al-Syaibani, 2009; Mohd Nor, 2023). Therefore, this review seeks to: (a) examine the potential of Tahfiz and Pondok institutions to revive Al-Kasb through social entrepreneurship, (b) identify their unique contributions in fostering ethical business practices, and (c) explore challenges and opportunities in sustainability and digital adaptation.

Method

This mini review adopted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to explore the concept of *al-Kasb* and its implications for social entrepreneurship within tahfiz and pondok educational institutions. The review was conducted through a structured process that involved literature search, screening, selection, coding, and thematic analysis as summarise in Figure1.

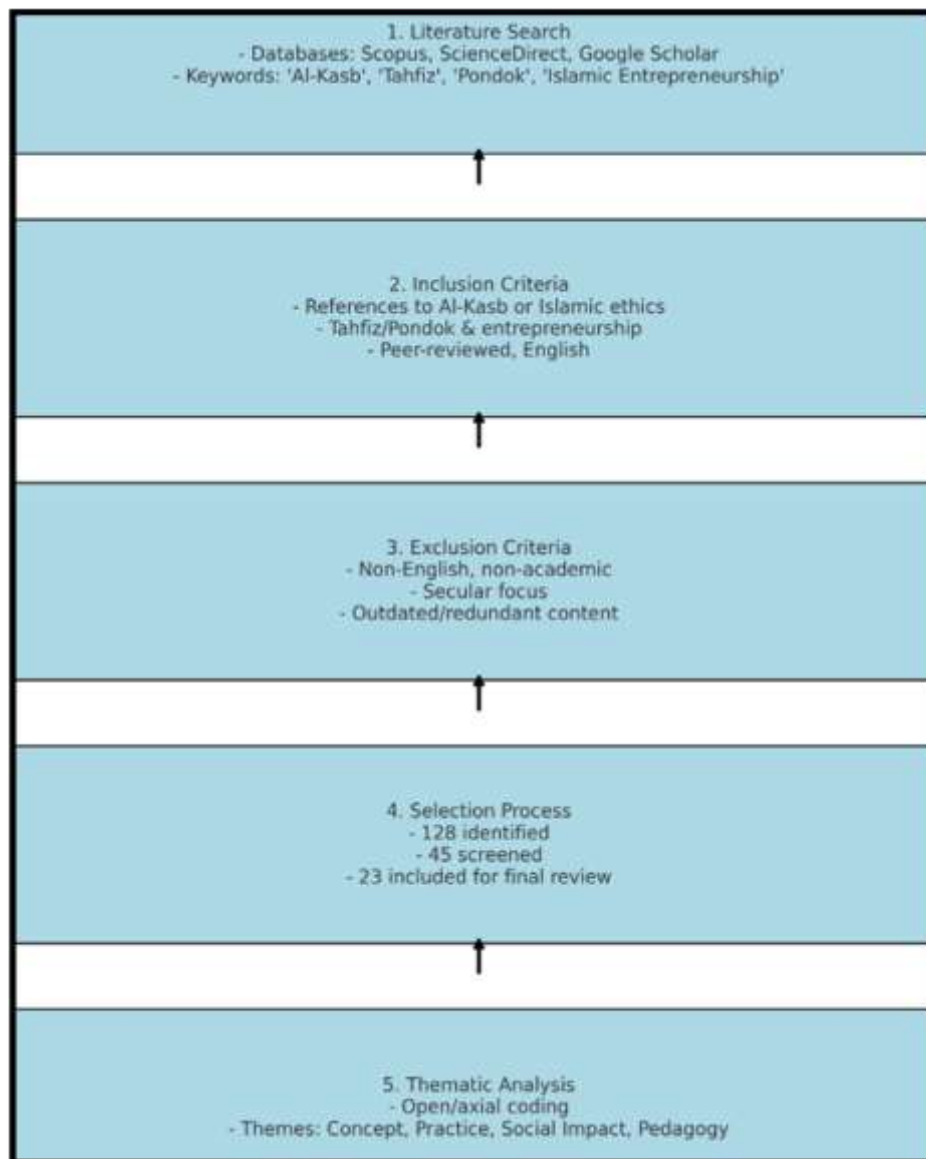


Figure 1: Structured Process of Methodology

Literature Search Strategy

A comprehensive search using scholarly databases including Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar to gather relevant academic literature. The search was performed between January 2024 and May 2025, using a combination of keywords and Boolean operators: [a] ("*Tahfiz*" OR "*Pondok*") AND ("*social entrepreneurship*" OR "*Islamic entrepreneurship*"); [b] ("*al-Kasb*" OR "*Islamic work ethics*") AND ("*Islamic education*" OR "*traditional religious education*"). Advanced filters were applied to refine the search based on subject area (Social Sciences, Religious Studies, Education, and Business) and publication type (peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, and conference papers).

Inclusion Criteria

To ensure conceptual and contextual relevance, the following inclusion criteria as follows; [a] Literature with explicit reference to *al-Kasb* or equivalent Islamic ethical work principles (e.g., *ikhtiar*, *amanah*, *halal livelihood*); [b] Studies that discuss entrepreneurial practices or initiatives within *tahfiz* or *pondok* institutions; [c] Peer-reviewed publications or credible academic sources (books, institutional reports); [d] Publications written in English and published between 2000–2025 to ensure contemporary relevance.

Exclusion Criteria

To enhance the precision of the review, the following types of sources were excluded as follows; [a] Non-English and non-academic materials, such as blogs, opinion pieces, or popular media; [b] Studies focusing on secular entrepreneurship without any reference to Islamic values or *al-Kasb*; [c] Redundant or outdated publications with minimal contribution to the evolving discourse.

Selection Process

An initial pool of 128 documents was identified. After title and abstract screening, 45 articles were selected for full-text review. Following a more rigorous evaluation using the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 23 articles were included in the final review.

Data Coding and Thematic Analysis

Each selected article was systematically reviewed and coded manually using a combination of open and axial coding techniques. Codes were grouped into broader themes reflecting key areas of interest: [a] Conceptual Foundations: Definitions and evolution of *al-Kasb* in Islamic economic thought; [b] Institutional Practices: How *tahfiz* and *pondok* institutions engage with entrepreneurship; [c] Social Impact and Sustainability: Role of religious education in community-based economic empowerment; [d] Pedagogical Innovation: Integration of entrepreneurial curriculum in Islamic settings. The thematic analysis enabled the identification of recurring patterns, gaps, and emerging models of faith-driven social enterprise rooted in traditional Islamic education. These findings were interpreted in light of contemporary challenges and opportunities faced by Islamic educational institutions.

Discussion

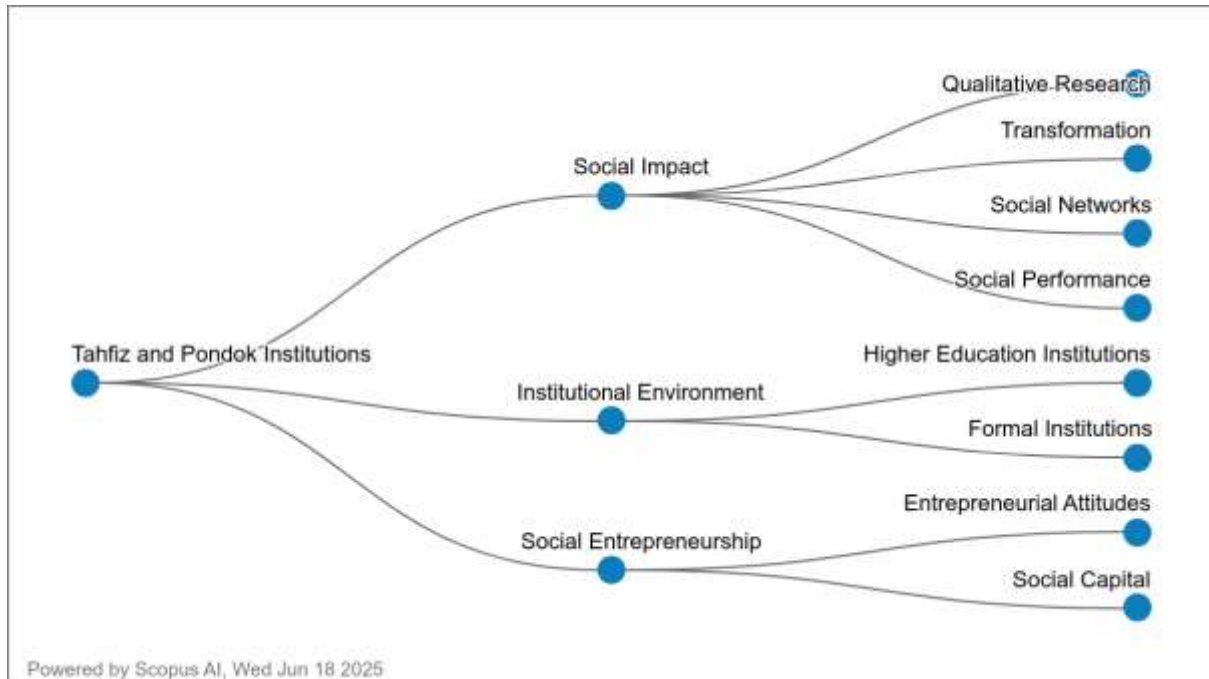


Figure 2: A General Overview of Reviving Al-Kasb

The figure 2 illustrates the conceptual link between tahfiz and pondok institutions and social entrepreneurship, highlighting key themes such as social impact, institutional environment, and entrepreneurial attitudes influencing community transformation.

Social impact

The incorporation of Al-Kasb into institutional narratives introduces a value-centric framework for enterprise. Studies show that ethical livelihood training within Pondok institutions enhances social capital and community trust (Widiastuti et al., 2019). However, criticisms include repetitive models and lack of localized data. More empirical studies contextualized in Southeast Asia are needed.

Institutional Environment

Tahfiz and Pondok operate within distinct ecosystems involving informal education, spiritual mentorship, and community relationships. These offer unique strengths, yet literature often adapts Western models without considering the nuanced Islamic framework. Enhancing integration with modern education and governance systems, while preserving religious identity, is essential.

Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship in Islamic institutions emphasizes ethical enterprise, waqf-based finance, and sustainability. Critics argue that existing frameworks are generic and detached from Islamic pedagogy. Constructing Shariah-aligned entrepreneurship education based on lived experiences of Tahfiz institutions remains a critical task. Social entrepreneurship also prioritizes a balance between profit and social responsibility, in line with Islamic principles

that reject exploitation and oppression (Hassan & Rahman, 2020). This principle forms the foundation of successful social entrepreneurship by ensuring ethical and sustainable business operations in the long term.

Conclusion

This mini review set out to explore the potential of tahfiz and pondok institutions in reviving the classical Islamic economic concept of *al-Kasb* through the lens of social entrepreneurship. Summary of findings as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Findings

Key Focus Area	Summary of Findings
Study Objectives	To examine the intersection of faith-based education and social entrepreneurship, and assess the relevance of <i>al-Kasb</i> in modern socio-economic settings.
Traditional Role of Institutions	Primarily focused on Qur'anic memorization and spiritual development.
Emerging Potential	High potential to become agents of ethical and value-driven economic transformation.
Embedded Islamic Values	Promotion of <i>ikhtiar</i> (effort), <i>amanah</i> (trustworthiness), and <i>maslahah</i> (public interest) in education and practice.
Theoretical Contribution	Bridges classical Islamic economic thought with contemporary social enterprise frameworks.
Practical Contribution	Highlights the need for localized, Shariah-compliant entrepreneurial curricula and digital tools.
Policy Implications	Encourages integration of vocational and entrepreneurial training into religious education policy.
Overall Conclusion	Tahfiz and pondok institutions can be repositioned as sustainable, impactful, and resilient educational-economic hubs.

The objectives of this study is to examine the intersection between faith-based education and value-driven enterprise, and to assess the applicability of *al-Kasb* in a modern socio-economic context, have been successfully achieved. The findings affirm that while these institutions traditionally focus on spiritual and Qur'anic memorization, they also possess untapped potential to become agents of ethical economic transformation. By embedding entrepreneurial values such as *ikhtiar* (effort), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *maslahah* (public interest), tahfiz and pondok schools can nurture students who are not only spiritually grounded but also economically self-reliant and socially responsible. In terms of theoretical contribution, this study bridges classical Islamic economic principles with modern concepts of social entrepreneurship, offering a culturally grounded framework that aligns with Shariah-compliant development goals. Practically, it highlights the need for localized entrepreneurial curricula, digital integration, and capacity-building efforts that are tailored to the unique context of these institutions. From a policy perspective, the study supports the formulation of inclusive educational policies that integrate vocational, entrepreneurial, and digital literacy components into the religious education system. This can potentially guide future reforms under national education blueprints and socio-economic transformation plans. In conclusion, by reviving *al-Kasb* within tahfiz and pondok ecosystems, these institutions can evolve beyond their

traditional roles to become sustainable, socially impactful, and economically resilient hubs, preserving Islamic values while proactively addressing contemporary challenges.

Acknowledgement

This research was made possible with the support from Unit MyBrain 2.0, Bahagian Biasiswa, Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi (KPT) and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI). We extend our heartfelt thanks for the financial assistance and continued encouragement towards academic excellence and knowledge development. Special appreciation is extended to the administrators and educators of the selected tahfiz and pondok institutions for their openness, cooperation, and insightful sharing, which greatly enriched this study.

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