

## PURE ISLAMIC STUDY PROGRAMS IN INDONESIA: SCIENTIFIC PARADIGMS, CHALLENGES, AND SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

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**Abstract:** This article seeks answers by discussing the scholarly paradigm of Islamic study programs in Indonesia, the challenges of era 4.0, and the efforts they are making to survive. Pure Islamic Studies program is one that teaches predominantly Islamic texts or is monodisciplinary. The program has been proven to contribute to a skilled and professional workforce, although this is doubtful for the future. The phenomenon of being disinterested, unproductive, and even closed down indicates that pure Islamic studies programs are facing serious problems. The research is based on primary and secondary data. Primary data collection comes from observations and interviews. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from articles and related policy documents. This article found that the difficulty of pure Islamic study programs to compete is not only caused by market-driven and sophisticated technological developments, but also the conceptual-analytical paradigm originating from the Middle East has been deeply rooted in the learning methods. Islamic study program managers have made efforts by expanding partnership networks, strengthening informal education, and publishing information on social media. This study points to the importance of taking into account the needs of the market and aligning them with the ultimate goal

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of graduates. Supporting various activities aimed at developing students' skills beyond those learned in the program is needed.

**Keywords:** Islamic Study Programs, Islamic University, Scientific Paradigm.

## Introduction

The advent of Industry 4.0 has far-reaching implications that extend beyond the manufacturing and technology sectors,<sup>1</sup> impacting all facets of life, including education.<sup>2</sup> Although the situation may appear to be one of normalcy, the advent of new technologies and market forces have led to a segmentation of the industry's demand for skilled labor. Ali et al. (2020) have highlighted the fact that the advent of the 4.0 era has generated a plethora of new job opportunities that require the possession of practical skills.<sup>3</sup> Trotta and Garengo demonstrate how supervisory roles, typically occupied by individuals with a background in management education, are becoming obsolete as they are supplanted by automated processes.<sup>4</sup> Opportunities for graduates with a background in applied engineering are available in a number of areas, including informatics, mechatronics, process engineering, machine learning and systems integration.<sup>5</sup> Gordon et al.

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<sup>1</sup> Alejandro Germán Frank, Lucas Santos Dalenogare, and Néstor Fabián Ayala, "Industry 4.0 Technologies: Implementation Patterns in Manufacturing Companies," *International Journal of Production Economics* 210, no. January (2019): 15–26, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2019.01.004>; Lucas Freund and Salah Al-Majeed, "The Industry 4.0 Knowledge & Technology Framework," *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt* 17, no. 9 (2020): 6321–39; Morteza Ghobakhloo, "Industry 4.0, Digitization, and Opportunities for Sustainability," *Journal of Cleaner Production* 252 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.119869>; T. Stock and G. Seliger, "Opportunities of Sustainable Manufacturing in Industry 4.0," *Procedia CIRP* 40 (2016): 536–41, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procir.2016.01.129>.

<sup>2</sup> Zeynep Ayer and Hanife Akgul, "Examining the Impact of Industry 4.0 on Education," *Journal of Awareness* 5, no. 2 (2020): 159–68, <https://doi.org/10.26809/joa.5.013>.

<sup>3</sup> Abdul Ali, Donna J. Kelley, and Jonathan Levie, "Market-Driven Entrepreneurship and Institutions," *Journal of Business Research* 113, no. September 2017 (2020): 117–28, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.03.010>.

<sup>4</sup> Dennis Trotta and Patrizia Garengo, "Industry 4.0 Key Research Topics: A Bibliometric Review," *2018 7th International Conference on Industrial Technology and Management*, no. January (2018): 113–17, DOI: 10.1109/ICITM.2018.8333930.

<sup>5</sup> David Brougham and Jarrod Haar, "Smart Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, and Algorithms (STARA): Employees' Perceptions of Our Future Workplace," *Journal of Management and Organization* 24, no. 2 (2018): 239–57; Carl

(2020) reported that the University of Limerick deliberately established the Master of Mechatronics programme in order to meet the strategic needs of the manufacturing sector in Ireland and internationally.<sup>6</sup> The existence of a degree programme for mechanical scientists serves to affirm the importance of technical skills for the 4.0 era.

The prevalence of conceptual-analytical study programmes as a primary educational option is gradually declining. In Indonesia, conceptual-analytical-based study programmes are a common feature of Islamic higher education institutions. Syam identifies three scientific models observed in Islamic universities: pure Islamic science, multidisciplinary Islam, and general science study programmes.<sup>7</sup> A review of the three models revealed a notable absence of interest in pure Islamic studies among students on Islamic campuses.<sup>8</sup> In this context, the term “pure Islamic studies” is typically used to describe a study programme that teaches Islamic studies to students without much contact with general science. Pure Islamic study programmes are available at both the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Sharia; however, only a limited range of sciences is taught at the latter institution. The Faculty of Ushuluddin offers instruction in a number of scientific disciplines, including Kalam science, mantiq, tarekat, theology, and Aqidah Akhlak, which is classified as Islamic philosophy.

The lack of enthusiasm among the general public is clearly demonstrated in the curriculum offered by UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu. The Ilmu Tasawuf program has a maximum enrollment of 40 students. However, in 2019, only seven students were enrolled,

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Benedikt Frey and Michael A Osborne, “The Future of Employment: How Susceptible Are Jobs to Computerisation?,” *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 114 (2013): 254–80, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2016.08.019>; Ghobakhloo, “Industry 4.0, Digitization, and Opportunities for Sustainability.”

<sup>6</sup> Seamus Gordon, Alan Ryan, and Shane Loughlin, “Meeting The Needs of Industry in Smart Manufacture – The Definition of a New Profession and a Case Study in Providing the Required Skillset,” *Procedia Manufacturing* 17 (2018): 262–69, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.promfg.2018.10.045>.

<sup>7</sup> Nur Syam, “Menyeimbangkan Prodi Agama Dan Umum,” 2018, <http://nursyam.uinsby.ac.id/?p=832>.

<sup>8</sup> A. Wahid, “Tantangan Pengembangan Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin Menyongsong Perubahan IAIN Ar-Raniry Menjadi UIN,” *Ar-Raniry: International Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2020): 161–72, <http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/jar.v1i1.7389>.

and five students were enrolled the following year. In 2021, the programme was formally discontinued. In the 2018 and 2019 academic periods, the UIN Sheikh Djamil Djambek in Bukittinggi offered two classes within the Aqidah dan Filsafat Islam (AFI) programme. However, the class was only filled to one-third of its capacity. A similar situation can be observed at UIN Ar-Raniry Aceh. In the AFI, which has 80 quotas, the number of applicants received in 2016 was 32, and in 2018, it was 48. It is regrettable that the empirical evidence required to fully explain the scarcity of enthusiasts in the study programme has not yet been provided. A review of existing literature reveals that similar constraints are evident in the examination of this specific area, including studies conducted by Suprpto, Mukhsin, and Siregar; Fikri, Ernawati, and Satori.<sup>9</sup> A variety of strategies have been put forth by different parties in an effort to resolve this issue. However, the implementation of these strategies has not been optimal, as evidenced by the findings of Ernawati and Satori.

From the 1950s to the early 21st century, there was a notable surge in interest in pure Islamic studies programmes. Subsequently, a gradual decline was observed, at least until 2024. The most pertinent question is why there has been a decline in popularity, a lack of productivity, and even closure of pure Islamic studies programmes. This study proposes that the decline of pure Islamic studies programmes can be attributed primarily to structural shifts in the market and technological landscape. The conceptual and analytical foundation that previously served as a source of distinction is no longer aligned with the current era, rendering it obsolete. This paper will substantiate this assertion by examining the evolution of the scientific paradigm that underlies Islamic studies programmes at *Pendidikan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri* (State Islamic Religious Universities). Subsequently, the impact of market and technological

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<sup>9</sup> Fetty Ernawati and Djam'an Satori, "Strategi Peningkatan Mutu Pendidikan Pada Program Studi Langka Peminat Di PTAIN," *Jurnal Administrasi Pendidikan* 8, no. 1 (2013); S Suprpto, "Eksistensi Prodi Agama Langka Peminat Di UIN Ar Raniry Banda Aceh," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 08, no. 1 (2019): 572–90, <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v8i01.312>; Abdul Mukhsin and Ramadhan Syahmedi Siregar, "Program Studi Perbandingan Mazhab Dan Problematika Sepi Peminat," *Taqnin: Jurnal Syariah Dan Hukum* I, no. 2 (2019): 61–74; Sholeh Fikri, "Tantangan Program Studi Berbasis Islam," *TAZKIR: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Dan Keislaman* 4, no. 2 (2018): 381–94, <https://doi.org/10.24952/tazkir.v4i2.916>.

structuring on Islamic studies programmes will be delineated, and finally, the strategies employed by managers in navigating these changes will be examined.

The study is qualitative in nature and makes use of both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected throughout 2022 through the administration of semi-structured interviews with eight informants, as detailed in Table 1. The selection of informants and research locations was based on three criteria: data adequacy, funding, and the impact of the ongoing pandemic. The data collected included an account of the history and development of the study programme, together with an analysis of the challenges encountered during its evolution from both internal and external perspectives. In addition, the data set comprised a range of activities, partnerships, scholarship programmes, and patterns in the content, structure, and timing of entrance exams for university applicants. Secondary sources include profiles of the study programme, student data, curriculum, semester learning plans, internship reports, and social media and community service reports.

The research process was conducted in three distinct phases. The preliminary phase, designated as the pre-research stage, involves the gathering of preliminary data and confirmation of the existence of the problem. To gain further insight into the subject matter, interviews were conducted with the Head of Ilmu Tasawuf at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu and Aqidah dan Filsafat Islam (AFI) at UIN Sheikh Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi. The preliminary data focused on two key areas: the number of students enrolled each year and the perception that prospective students lack interest in pursuing pure Islamic study programmes. The second stage is fieldwork, which involves the collection of data through a combination of in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. All of the target informants are situated on the island of Sumatra, thus facilitating direct interviews without the need for intermediaries. In advance of the research team's departure to the location, the interview request permission letter and the results of the requisite vaccinations were submitted. The informants granted permission for the audio recording device to be placed in front of them, thereby ensuring that their voices could be clearly heard even if they were wearing a mask. However, two informants were contacted by researchers via telephone to request additional data and clarification of certain terms

during the course of the interview. Meanwhile, the documentary data was transmitted via an online messaging application.

**Table 1. The Demographics of Informants**

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Job Title	University
Int. 1	M	+40	Chair of Ilmu Tasawuf	UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu
Int. 2	M	+33	Chair of Aqidah dan Filsafat Islam (AFI)	
Int. 3	M	+35	Chair of Ilmu Hadis	
Int. 4	M	+45	Chair of Studi Agama-Agama	UIN Raden Fatah Palembang
Int. 5	M	+45	Chair of AFI	
Int. 6	M	+35	Chair of AFI	UIN Syekh Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi
Int. 7	F	+45	Chair of AFI	UIN Imam Bonjol
Int. 8	F	+45	Chair of Ilmu Hadis	Padang

The process of data presentation entailed a series of mechanisms, including data transcription, keyword search, keyword categorisation, and adjustment. A comprehensive examination of the transcripts was undertaken to guarantee the accurate interpretation of the data. The objective of the categorisation and subsequent posting of the data is to identify the most significant findings within the field. Once the data has been presented in the form of a report, we request that the informants verify the results. This process is fundamental to guarantee the integrity of the data and to prevent any statements that contravene the informants' original intentions. Subsequently, the verified research report was subjected to analysis. In presenting the data in this paper, we employed a triangulation of sources and methods in an alternating sequence. The comprehensive analysis has enabled the researcher to reach a final conclusion.

### **The Quest for an Islamic Scientific Paradigm**

The proposal of an Islamic studies programme at the post-secondary level has been a subject of debate since the 1930s. On several occasions, Masjoemi (Majelis Sjoero Moeslimin Indonesia) and MIAI (Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia) have articulated a desire to establish an Islamic university. Nata suggests that the initiative was ultimately unsuccessful due to Indonesia's lack of sovereignty and the

prevalence of national political instability.<sup>10</sup> Subsequent to Indonesia's attainment of independence, the STI (Sekolah Tinggi Islam) was established in Yogyakarta. Subsequently, in 1948, the institution underwent a name change and became known as the University of Islam Indonesia (UII).<sup>11</sup> The institution offered four academic programmes. The curriculum covered four academic disciplines: The four academic disciplines offered were Religion, Law, Education and Economics. The Islamic studies programme was inaugurated concurrently with the Faculty of Religion.

Subsequently, the Government of Indonesia, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, assumed control of the Faculty of Religious Affairs with the objective of establishing a Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (PTAIN). In 1951, the PTAIN commenced its academic operations in Yogyakarta.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, in Jakarta, the Ministry of Religious Affairs established the Akademi Dinas Ilmu Agama (ADIA). The improvement of political stability in Indonesia in 1960 provided an opportunity for the Ministry of Religious Affairs to merge Islamic universities into the Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN). As a result, PTAIN in Yogyakarta became IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, and ADIA in Jakarta became IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah. This was followed by the establishment of other IAINs in several parts of Indonesia.

The curriculum offered by IAIN in the field of religious sciences is centred on the study of Middle Eastern studies. The pedagogical approach adopted at the institution is normative, whereby lecturers instruct students on a diverse array of texts.<sup>13</sup> Azra observed that the references employed in the faculties of Ushuluddin, Abad, Tarbiyah, and Sharia are consistent with the institution where the

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<sup>10</sup> Abuddin Nata, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan Dan Perkembangan Lembaga-Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> UII, "Titik Perjalanan Sejarah UII," 2022, [https://www.uui.ac.id/profil/sejarah/#:~:text=Perguruan Tinggi Nasional Pertama di,Islam \(STI\) di Jakarta.](https://www.uui.ac.id/profil/sejarah/#:~:text=Perguruan Tinggi Nasional Pertama di,Islam (STI) di Jakarta.)

<sup>12</sup> Suyadi and Sutrisno, "A Genealogical Study of Islamic Education Science at the Faculty of Ilmu Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan UIN Sunan Kalijaga," *Al-Jami'ah* 56, no. 1 (2018): 29–58, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2018.561.29-58>.

<sup>13</sup> Abd Rachman Assegaf, Abd Razak Bin Zakaria, and Abdul Muhsein Sulaiman, "The Closer Bridge towards Islamic Studies in Higher Education in Malaysia and Indonesia," *Creative Education* 3, no. 6A (2012): 986–92.

lecturer obtained their degree.<sup>14</sup> The lecturers merely present the material as outlined in the reading material, without contextualisation. This ultimately has a negligible impact on students' capacity for critical thinking and their ability to function effectively in social contexts. This pattern persists in some study programmes and appears to be resistant to transformation towards interdisciplinary studies in accordance with the needs of civilisation.

Suyadi and Sutrisno have demonstrated that the curriculum of the Faculty of Tarbiyah prior to 2000 was primarily focused on the study of the Qur'an, Hadith, Aqidah (Islamic theology), Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and Tarikh (Islamic history), with the field of Islamic education itself not yet established.<sup>15</sup> Approximately half of the curriculum was devoted to religious studies, with rote memorization of texts evident in every final examination. Education in Tarbiyah remains primarily descriptive, presenting doctrines and dogmas without scientific inquiry into Islamic education.<sup>16</sup>

Table 2. Integration of Islamic and Sciences

No.	State Islamic University	Paradigm/Metaphors	Nature of Science
1	UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta	Teoantroposentrik-Integralistik	Non-Dichotomy
2	UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta	Integrasi dialogis	Non-Dichotomy
3	UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang	Integrasi Pohon Keilmuan	Non-Dichotomy
4	UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung	Wahyu Memandu Ilmu	Non-Dichotomy
5	UIN Alauddin, Makassar	Integrasi Balla Lompoa	Non-Dichotomy
6	UIN Sunan Ampel, Surabaya	Integrated Twin Towers	Non-Dichotomy

Attempts have been made to modify the modus operandi of the Islamic Studies Program, shifting the focus from textual learning to a more contextual approach. Abdullah reiterates that the learning

<sup>14</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Jejak-Jejak Jaringan Kaum Muslim: Dari Australia Hingga Timur Tengah* (Bandung: Hikmah, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Suyadi and Sutrisno, "A Genealogical Study of Islamic Education Science at the Faculty of Ilmu Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan UIN Sunan Kalijaga."

<sup>16</sup> Abdul Munir Mulkhan, "Filsafat Tarbiyah Berbasis Kecerdasan Makrifat," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 2, no. 2 (2013): 224, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2013.22.219-239>.



orientation of the Middle East, South Asia, and other Islamic regions is not conducive to the advancement of humanity, welfare, and global peace.<sup>17</sup> The approach of treating religious science as a standalone entity has been demonstrated to be inadequate for addressing the challenges faced by humanity. Consequently, some Islamic thinkers in Indonesia are endeavouring to develop approaches that aspire to integrate religious and general studies. Table 2 illustrates the diverse forms of scientific paradigms or metaphors adopted by various Universities Islam Negeri (UIN). There is a consensus among these institutions that scientific integration is a crucial aspect of Islamic education.<sup>18</sup>

It is the responsibility of those responsible for the administration of programmes of pure Islamic study to modify the curriculum in order to align it with an integrative model. Concurrently, instructors incorporate Western theoretical and epistemological perspectives into their respective courses. Although the conceptual framework is appealing, the practical implementation is somewhat confusing. Lukens-Bull expresses skepticism about the feasibility of this approach, citing its incompatibility with the scientific tradition of free and open inquiry, which is distinct from the acceptance of verification from sacred texts.<sup>19</sup> The obligation to integrate courses ultimately gives rise to the practice of seeking Qur'anic verses or hadiths that align with the subject matter under discussion.

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<sup>17</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies Di Perguruan Tinggi: Pendekatan Integratif Interkoneksi* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2006); M. Amin Abdullah, "Islamic Studies in Higher Education in Indonesia: Challenges, Impact and Prospects for the World Community," *Al-Jami'ab* 55, no. 2 (2017): 391–426. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2017.552.391-426>; Amin Abdullah, *Studi Agama Normativitas Atau Historisitas* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> Imam Suprayogo, *Perubahan Pendidikan Tinggi Islam Refleksi Perubahan LAIN/STAIN Menjadi UIN* (Malang: UIN Malang Press, 2008); Abdullah, "Islamic Studies in Higher Education in Indonesia: Challenges, Impact and Prospects for the World Community"; Barsihannor, *Integrasi Keilmuan Di UIN Alauddin Makassar* (Makassar: Alauddin University Press, 2020); Kusmana, Sudarnoto Abdul Hakim, and PPJM, *Integrasi Keilmuan UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta Menuju Universitas Rizet* (Jakarta: UIN Jakarta Press, 2006); Nanat Fatah Natsir, ed., *Pengembangan Pendidikan Tinggi Dalam Perspektif Wahyu Memandu Ilmu* (Bandung: Gunung Djati Press, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Ronald A. Lukens-Bull, *Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia: Continuity and Conflict, Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia: Continuity and Conflict* (New York: Pilgrave Mc Millan, 2013).

Iqbal and Wahyuni identified four factors that present significant challenges for lecturers. These are the exclusive claim of scriptural truth, the sacralisation of religious thought, the restriction of religious science to be explored, and the maintenance of a linear scientific approach in Indonesia.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, a number of lecturers with a balanced combination of religious and scientific qualifications were able to apply this paradigm. Some of them even made significant contributions to the development of new methodologies and characteristics of modern Islamic science. It is therefore evident that the quality of the human resources at PISP will be a determining factor in the success of the scientific integration paradigm in the future.

### **Market Structures Opportunities for Growth**

The study of Islam as a distinct academic discipline has a long history, with the first such programmes emerging at the College of Islam (STI) in Yogyakarta around the 1940s. The initial focus was on the teaching of Islamic sciences based on Shari'ah (Islamic law), Muamalah (Islamic economics), Da'wah (Islamic communication), and Ushuluddin (Islamic aqidah). The intricate nature of modern life, coupled with the emergence of Islamic scholars, has given rise to the evolution of Islamic knowledge. The Shari'ah department is divided into the following disciplines: The disciplines of Islamic family law (*al-Ab}mal al-Syakhsbiyyah*), Islamic state law (*Siyāsah*), Islamic criminal law (*Jināyah*), Sharia economic law (*Muāmalah*), and comparative madzhab are all part of the curriculum. Similarly, the field of Ushuluddin has expanded to encompass a diverse range of disciplines, including Aqidah dan Filsafat Islam, Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Tafsir, Ilmu Hadis, Studi Agama-agama, Sosiologi Agama, and Pemikiran Politik Islam.

In the context of PTKIN or State Islamic Religious Universities, Ushuluddin is the faculty that most closely adheres to the Islamic scientific tradition. This scholarship has its origins in Islamic higher education institutions in the Middle East, with Al-Azhar in Cairo representing a particularly influential example. The

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<sup>20</sup> Moch Iqbal and Betti Dian Wahyuni, "Integrasi Keilmuan Yang Rumit: Wacana Dan Praksis Integrasi Keilmuan Sain Dan Agama Di PTKIN," *Nuansa : Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Masyarakat* 13, no. 2 (2020): 168–75, DOI: 10.29300/nuansa.v13i2.3504.

alumni of Islamic boarding schools and madrasah aliyah, who pursued their undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Cairo, introduced the nuances and methods of learning to Indonesia. These methods were text-centred, with an emphasis on memorisation of words and references to the views of previous experts, as observed by Abdullah.<sup>21</sup> However, this text-based learning model has since become obsolete in light of the evolving situation and conditions in Indonesia.

The Faculty of Ushuluddin is currently confronted with a series of unprecedented challenges pertaining to its academic programmes. The 4.0 era, in which markets and technology exert significant influence, is perceived as a significant challenge for programmes focused on pure Islamic studies. In the contemporary labour market, there is a demand for workers who possess practical skills and expertise, as opposed to those who are primarily focused on conceptual analysis.<sup>22</sup> Ali et al. proposed that this market demand was influenced by the development of the technology and telecommunications industry.<sup>23</sup> The considerable demand for skilled and practical labour has resulted in a notable shift in the landscape and outlook of prospective students. Despite the fact that Islamic campuses continue to receive a considerable number of applications, a significant proportion of these applicants are ultimately enrolled in programmes outside the field of ushuluddin, particularly in general studies, and exhibit a distinct graduate profile.

In a study conducted by Sojkin et al., it was determined that prospective students prioritize job opportunities and institutional reputation as significant factors in their decision-making process.<sup>24</sup> This finding is supported by studies conducted on various campuses

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<sup>21</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies Di Perguruan Tinggi*, ed. M. Adib Abdushomad (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Brougham and Haar, "Smart Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, and Algorithms (STARA): Employees' Perceptions of Our Future Workplace"; Frey and Osborne, "The Future of Employment: How Susceptible Are Jobs to Computerisation?"; Ghobakhloo, "Industry 4.0, Digitization, and Opportunities for Sustainability."

<sup>23</sup> Ali, Kelley, and Levie, "Market-Driven Entrepreneurship and Institutions."

<sup>24</sup> Bogdan Sojkin, Pawel Bartkowiak, and Agnieszka Skuza, "Determinants of Higher Education Choices and Student Satisfaction: The Case of Poland," *Higher Education* 63, no. 5 (2012): 565–81, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-011-9459-2>.

worldwide.<sup>25</sup> Prospective students tend to express a preference for study programmes that offer clear and definite graduate profiles, including roles such as teachers, bankers, lawyers, prosecutors, reporters, customer service representatives, and entrepreneurs. In light of the prevailing economic circumstances and the concomitant uncertainty regarding future employment prospects, prospective students are demonstrating a heightened selectivity and eschewing programs that do not offer a discernible pathway to gainful employment. Consequently, programmes of study that are exclusively Islamic in nature are witnessing a decline in popularity. In some instances, the lack of employability of graduates from the programme has resulted in its closure.

The phenomenon of market structuring is also evident when graduates from programmes that are exclusively focused on Islamic studies seek employment opportunities. The underlying assumption is that when alumni act in accordance with the graduate outcomes that have been defined by the academic programme, the objective is deemed to have been achieved. This assumption is not wholly supported by empirical evidence, as a number of factors impinge upon it. Firstly, it is becoming increasingly challenging to secure employment that offers specialised roles within pure Islamic studies programmes. Secondly, upon identifying a suitable position, graduates begin to consider factors such as salary and career path. Therefore, they tend to seek employment with organisations that offer financial remuneration and career advancement opportunities. Conversely, contemporary organisations typically seek to employ individuals who possess expertise in the fields of technology, engineering, and operations.

The influence of market-driven and technological advancements on the conceptualisation of developing pure Islamic study programmes is considerable. The programme has undergone a process of evolution, extending its scope to encompass not only

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<sup>25</sup> Paulo Lopes Henriques et al., “University or Polytechnic? A Fuzzy-Set Approach of Prospective Students’ Choice and Its Implications for Higher Education Institutions’ Managers,” *Journal of Business Research* 89 (2018): 435–41, DOI: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.12.024; Ruswahida binti Ibnu Ruslan et al., “Determinants Students’ Selection of Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia,” *Advances in Environmental Biology* 8, no. 9 (2014): 406–16; Joseph Kee Ming Sia, “University Choice: Implications for Marketing and Positioning,” *Education as Change* 3, no. 1 (2013): 7–14, DOI: 10.5923/j.edu.20130301.02.

formal education but also informal education. The focus of formal education remains on the acquisition of conceptual knowledge, reasoning, and problem-solving abilities. In contrast, informal education is conducted through collaboration with a variety of stakeholders, including individuals within the same study programme, organisations in the same field, and organisations designated as NGOs (non-governmental organisations).

### **Sustainability Initiatives of Islamic Study Programs at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu**

The administrators of the Islamic studies programmes at the Faculty of Ushuluddin have identified a lack of prospective student interest in their programmes. The quotas for new students that have been in place since the programme's inception, as determined by leadership meetings, are proving challenging to fulfil. The Ilmu Hadis (IH) programme at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu has a quota of 40 seats for new students. In the 2021 admissions cycle, the programme received a total of 23 applications, with only 9 students ultimately registering. The Aqidah dan Filsafat Islam (AFI) programme at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang offers two classes for new students, but only one class is fully enrolled. In contrast, the AFI at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang has been able to fulfil its entire quota, despite having to accept students in the third category. Failure to meet the student quota has the potential to have a detrimental impact on the long-term sustainability of the programme. The Department of Ilmu Tasawuf at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu has acknowledged that it did not take sufficient action to prevent this outcome.

It has been argued that the designation of our study programme is ineffective in attracting prospective students and that it is perceived as overly inflexible. Nevertheless, it is my contention that these concerns can be addressed. The implementation of the proposed changes was delayed, and the university did not demonstrate sufficient commitment to the project. Consequently, the Ilmu Tasawuf study programme has not enrolled any new students since June 2020. (Int. 1)

In order to fulfil the enrolment quotas for academic programmes, university leaders and managers employ a variety of

strategies. Three principal categories of strategies were identified in the field findings: the utilisation of social media, the promotion of collaboration, and the reinforcement of informal education. These initiatives are intended to invigorate the academic environment through the organisation of a range of activities. Information is disseminated on a regular basis via social media platforms owned by the study programme and the official university website. The underlying assumption is that the greater the volume of positive news, the more detailed the information about the study programme, and the more vibrant the academic atmosphere, the greater the likelihood that the study programme will be noticed, understood, and attracted by prospective students.

“The objective is to establish a high level of activity. We engage in a multitude of tasks, disseminate information, particularly on social media, and adopt a wait-and-see approach, anticipating that individuals will eventually seek out our resources.” (Int. 6)

“Given the restricted number of personnel available, the university is unable to allocate funds for the study programme. Consequently, students are responsible for the management of social media accounts, which enables the university to maintain an active presence on these platforms. “This is currently the sole responsibility assigned to us.” (Int. 2)

The role of social media in the promotional mix has become increasingly significant due to its capacity to facilitate bidirectional communication.<sup>26</sup> As elucidated by Rosyidah, Matin, and Rosyidi, academic institutions have employed social media platforms to disseminate a multitude of positive content and information regarding their institutional services.<sup>27</sup> The ease of access, absence of cost, capacity to convey messages in informal language, and rapid response

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<sup>26</sup> W. Glynn Mangold and David J. Faulds, “Social Media: The New Hybrid Element of the Promotion Mix,” *Business Horizons* 52, no. 4 (2009): 357–65; Mayank Yadav, Yatish Joshi, and Zillur Rahman, “Mobile Social Media: The New Hybrid Element of Digital Marketing Communications,” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 189 (2015): 335–43, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.03.229>.

<sup>27</sup> Naeli Rosyidah, Matin, and Unifah Rosyidi, “Internationalization in Higher Education: University’s Effective Promotion Strategies in Building International Trust,” *European Journal of Educational Research* 9, no. 1 (2020): 351–61, <https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.9.1.351>.

to comments make updates on Instagram and Facebook the preferred method of information dissemination.

The aforementioned convenience encourages those in managerial roles to disseminate information about study programmes when the university is unable to allocate funds for promotional activities. The head of the AFI at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu established StudioAFI as a forum for student-led creation and digital marketing. Students are instructed in the use of digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) and iPhone cameras for the purposes of filming, editing, and composing captions. All content produced by the studio is disseminated via the social media platforms Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube. The deployment of student diligence provides a solution to the absence of academic staff to manage and oversee the content creation process.

The second objective is to establish a formalised network of collaboration, as outlined in a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), which will last for a period of five years. All Islamic studies programmes in Indonesia are affiliated with a professional association or a community of practice. The association will organise an annual programme of routine activities in a designated venue, including national or international seminars, curriculum development, the formulation of cooperation agreements, the management of the association, and other beneficial activities. The association forum provides a platform for heads of study programmes to engage in communication with their professional colleagues, establish collaborative work agreements, and devise mechanisms for implementing activities. A national seminar was recently held at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang, which was attended by lecturers in Ilmu Hadis at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu and Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an (IIQ) in Jakarta, who served as speakers.

“It should be noted that the objective of this Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) is not solely to obtain accreditation. Furthermore, we have a moral obligation to facilitate the advancement of the study programme. The MoA also facilitates the delivery of online seminars, which bring together lecturers and practitioners, and which are offered free of charge. This is one of the advantages of the MoA”. (Int. 8)

“It was agreed that each institution would take a turn in hosting the event. In the previous month, the Hadith Science department at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang assumed this role. In the following month, it will be our institution’s turn to host the event. The invited lecturers will be duly acknowledged for their participation. It seems reasonable to posit that they also desire recognition. “It would therefore be unethical of us not to schedule reciprocal activities.” (Int. 3)

Moreover, collaboration is undertaken between academic programmes and industries or organisations that serve as the focus of subsequent alumni initiatives. Tereshchenko et al. identify eight benefits derived from the collaboration between the two parties, with study programmes playing a pivotal role in achieving these outcomes.<sup>28</sup> In general, study programme managers are responsible for initiating contact with industry partners at an early stage. The formation of a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) is a common practice among these collaborations for several reasons, including the following. Firstly, it streamlines the administrative process of placing internship students. Secondly, it permits study programmes to cultivate a reputation for providing support to alumni in their professional careers. Thirdly, it offers organisations the chance to recruit students for internships.

Fourthly, for specific types of organisations, such as educational institutions, study programmes serve to enhance the visibility of such institutions among prospective students who are on the cusp of graduation. In addition, organisational practitioners may contribute to the learning environment at universities in the capacity of contract lecturers or seminar speakers. Although these reasons appear to differ from the findings of Elsevier’s survey on the drivers of university–industry collaboration, students still stand to benefit. As Gerken et al. have observed, internships offer students the opportunity to enhance their career preparation, gain valuable work experience, become acquainted with the current needs of organisations, expand their

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<sup>28</sup> Elizaveta Tereshchenko et al., “Emerging Best Strategies and Capabilities for University–industry Cooperation: Opportunities for MSMEs and Universities to Improve Collaboration. A Literature Review 2000–2023,” *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship* 13, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-024-00386-4>.



professional networks, and receive compensation.<sup>29</sup> For work organisations, internships represent an efficacious yet cost-effective talent screening and recruitment tool, which may even be conducted without remuneration.<sup>30</sup>

The AFI UIN Sheikh Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi engages in collaborative endeavours with a number of organisations, including book publishers in Sumatra and Java, Islamic boarding schools and madrasah aliyah situated in West Sumatra, and non-governmental organisations. The manager has facilitated the placement of students in internships at Islamic schools, where they have the opportunity to gain experience in the Aqidah Akhlak and *Tab}sin al-Qur'an* courses. The students fulfil their obligations by exemplifying the standard of instruction and promoting the academic programme. Students at AFI UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu are placed for internships at the FKUB (Forum Komunikasi Umat Beragama/Religious Communication Forum), senior high schools or Madrasah Aliyah, and several mosques that are considered to be actively engaged in the teaching of Islamic philosophy. In contrast to the efforts made by AFI UIN Raden Fatah Palembang to utilise the moment of community service, both students who run KKN (*Kuliah Kerja Nyata*) lectures and lecturers who carry out community service activities for the tridharma of higher education are tasked with promoting the study programme when meeting with the community.

In conclusion, the strengthening of informal education can be defined as independent learning outside the classroom. The provision of informal learning spaces has been identified as an effective strategy

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<sup>29</sup> Maïke Gerken et al., "Enhancing the Academic Internship Learning Experience for Business Education-a Critical Review and Future Directions," *Learning at the Crossroads of Theory and Practice: Research on Innovative Learning Practices*, 2012, 7–22, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2846-2\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2846-2_2).

<sup>30</sup> Thomas A. Discenna, "The Discourses of Free Labor: Career Management, Employability, and the Unpaid Intern," *Western Journal of Communication* 80, no. 4 (2016): 435–52; Jessica L. Hurst, Philip Gardner, and Amy Dorie, "Are Unpaid Internships Just as Valuable? A Comparison of U.S. Work Integrated Learning Students' Perceptions of Paid and Unpaid Experiences," *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning* 24, no. 1 (2023): 57–81; Sean Edmund Rogers et al., "All Internships Are Not Created Equal: Job Design, Satisfaction, and Vocational Development in Paid and Unpaid Internships," *Human Resource Management Review* 31, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2019.100723>.

for fostering student learning experiences.<sup>31</sup> A variety of training sessions and discussions may be conducted by study programme managers, student organisations and students themselves. Students are at liberty to select those groups which align with their interests and aptitudes. The AFI Student Association of UIN Raden Fatah extends an invitation to students with an interest in popular and opinion writing. Upperclassmen with prior experience writing for daily newspapers serve as mentors for undergraduates. Morris, Collins and Hart identify several advantages of peer learning, including clarification of specific points, sharing of resources, problem-solving assistance, consensus building of knowledge and demonstration of skills.<sup>32</sup> The Ushuluddin Faculty at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu has established a community, known as Bangun Kata, which provides students with the opportunity to develop their skills in writing scientific articles. Furthermore, they have established StudioAFI with the objective of promoting digital literacy.

The objective of pure Islamic study programmes has been to attract prospective students and alumni. Nevertheless, this approach is merely provisional and has not addressed the fundamental issue. The sustained interest of prospective students is still driven by the appeal of attractive offers and the polish afforded by social media. This is in stark contrast to the Islamic study programmes offered at Islamic universities, which many students are attracted to. The study programmes in Islamic economics, Islamic business management, Islamic education, Islamic law, and Islamic communication are in demand in the labour market because the graduates are able to apply their knowledge in a clear and purposeful manner, which is an advantage in the job market. The structure of the market has driven prospective students to act in a rational manner, seeking to maximise their benefits in any given situation. Although rational choice is constrained by information, prospective students are able to circumvent the risk of unemployment or uncertainty regarding their prospective employment status.

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<sup>31</sup> Sohail Ahmad et al., "Research Café: An Informal Learning Space to Promote Research Learning Experiences of Graduate Students in a Private University of Pakistan," *Studies in Graduate and Postdoctoral Education* 14, no. 3 (2023): 381–98, <https://doi.org/10.1108/SGPE-01-2023-0011>.

<sup>32</sup> Timothy J. Morris, Sarah Collins, and Joanne Hart, "Informal Peer-Assisted Learning amongst Medical Students: A Qualitative Perspective," *Clinical Teacher*, 2024.

## Conclusion

The viability of pure Islamic study programmes is contingent upon the level of interest they can generate, particularly in light of the considerable public attention devoted to higher education. The tendency of prospective students to give priority to job insights in their decision-making process demonstrates the impact of market forces and technological developments on the potential for growth and development in Islamic study programmes. Furthermore, the prevailing academic culture tends to favour conceptual-based learning. Nevertheless, managers have implemented a series of strategies, including the establishment of partnership networks, the reinforcement of informal education, and the dissemination of information via social media.

These findings have implications for the management of study programmes, which must undertake a detailed analysis of market needs and developments in order to adjust them to the final objective of producing graduates who are equipped with the requisite skills and knowledge. This process may be initiated by a revision of the research and service roadmap of the study programme. It would be beneficial for lecturers who have been focusing on the study of books and phenomena in Islamic society to collaborate with technology practitioners in order to present appropriate Islamic applications. This endeavour will have an impact on the scientific direction of the pure Islamic study programme and the expansion of employment opportunities for graduates.

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