

Perception and Implementation of the Islamic Community Development Study Program in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

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Since 1925, Western countries have extensively researched community development science, focusing on social progress and community welfare. In 1995, Indonesia underwent a knowledge transformation by introducing Islamic Community Development, an applied science merging social sciences with Islamic values. This program gained popularity domestically until 2023 but remains obscure internationally. This study aims to examine public perceptions and the implementation of Islamic community development theories in Indonesia, emphasizing their central role in community development studies. Using a qualitative analysis with a phenomenological and holistic approach, data were gathered through focus groups, observations, interviews, and document analysis. Findings indicate varying perceptions among individuals regarding the concepts, scope, and objectives of the Islamic community development program, suggesting a need for a unified conceptual framework to align perceptions effectively.



Introduction

The study of the development of Islamic society is related to social, economic, and cultural aspects in Indonesia (Bayu, 2020). Socially, this development plays a role in strengthening community cohesion through the cultivation of Islamic values that encourage tolerance, solidarity, and cooperation between citizens (Ananda, Puspita, & Lidia, 2024). From an economic perspective, Islamic community development programs can encourage the economic empowerment of the ummah through various initiatives such as sharia cooperatives, productive zakat, and productive waqf, which aim to improve the economic welfare of the community (Sutjipto, 2017). Culturally, this development helps preserve and promote a rich and diverse Islamic culture, as well as strengthen a moderate and inclusive Islamic identity, so that it can face the challenges of globalization and modernization without losing its identity. Thus, this study is not only relevant for

improving people's quality of life but also important in building a solid foundation for sustainable national development.

Education plays an important role in shaping a prosperous and just society through the improvement of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for a productive and harmonious life. (Supardi Hamid & Rusmawan, 2022). With equal access to education, every individual has the opportunity to develop his or her potential, which in turn contributes to improving economic well-being through job creation, increased productivity, and poverty reduction. (Aminuddin, Harahap, & Dawi, 2021). In addition, education also plays a role in instilling the values of justice, equality, and respect for human rights, which are the basis for the creation of an inclusive and democratic society. Through education, individuals are taught to think critically, empathize, and actively participate in social life, all of which are essential for building a just and harmonious community.

The term community development was officially used in the UK in 1948 to replace the long-used term mass education. (Rofiah, 2021; Yigobalom, 2019). Currently, global dynamics show that there is significant inequality between countries, especially between developed and developing countries. (Dalimoenthe, 2023; Rustiadi, 2018). Even countries that are considered developed and prosperous also face internal challenges related to the fulfilment of welfare rights for their citizens. The weaknesses of the welfare state model are beginning to be seen with the increasing dependence of society on the country, which contributes to the resource crisis.

Community development involves a series of processes, tasks, practices, and visions to empower communities to actively participate in their development. The goal is to allow people to control their own goals. To achieve effective control, it is necessary to have a sustainable development structure and process in which communities can identify and formulate issues, needs, and problems that are relevant to them. Effective control also requires adequate access to resources, including income, materials, knowledge, and strong skills. (Firman, 2021; Hendrawati Hamid, 2018; Zubaedi, 2016).

After its early era, little was widely available about community development in writing, both for practitioners and academics who had access to libraries. However, since the 1960s, the literature on this topic has grown significantly. Currently, there are publishers such as Policy Press (www.policypress.co.uk) that specifically publish a category of books about community development. Although the price of books remains an issue for practitioners, this collection of books is now more accessible regularly.

Although the context of community development at both the national and international levels has undergone substantial changes in recent years, much of the information documented in publications comes from the International Association for Community Development (www.cdglobal.org). Valuable lessons can be learned from tracing the history of these various sources that can help practitioners learn from previous mistakes.

Community development experts from various countries have examined the issue of community development from various perspectives, including its concept, practice,

goals, and sustainability. In Indonesia, awareness of community development concepts is still relatively low in the international context as reflected in previous discussions.

The Indonesian government has implemented various policies to support higher education and the development of Islamic society, to improve the quality of human resources and the welfare of the people. In terms of regulations, the government has issued Regulation of the Minister of Religion No. 15 of 2018 concerning Islamic Religious Education and Islamic Boarding School Education, which regulates the governance of Islamic higher education and its development. In addition, the government through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and the Ministry of Religious Affairs provides funding in the form of scholarships such as the Indonesian Education Scholarship (BPI) and the Outstanding Santri Scholarship (PBSB) to support students in continuing higher education. Programs such as the Independent Campus Program and the Sustainable Professional Development and Development Program (PPKB) are also designed to improve the quality of education and the development of Islamic society. Through this program, it is hoped that synergy will be created between higher education institutions, Islamic boarding schools, and the community to develop the potential of Muslims in various aspects of life, including social, economic, and cultural. This support shows the government's commitment to strengthening the role of Islamic higher education as an important pillar in inclusive and sustainable national development.

Although the Islamic community development study program is popular, there are several serious polemics related to its basic concept. One example is the variation of different definitions regarding the development of Islamic society. Supposedly, in a discipline, there is consistency in perception even though there are variations in the arrangement of words in definitions. However, this variation should not change the direction or purpose of a theoretical concept.

Worryingly, there is no in-depth study that addresses the actual basic concepts and reaches a consensus on the orientation of the Islamic community development study program. This is the author's motivation to seek and find a widely accepted theory of Islamic community development so that it can be implemented for Indonesian society in general, including in rural and urban areas.

Based on the issues that have been described earlier, the author considers several theories as solutions to understand and overcome existing problems, as well as as a guide to analyze social phenomena that occur to find alternatives or solutions. Among these theories are the concept of community development and the concept of Islamic community development as the main theory. Each theory has its use in the context and phenomenon that is appropriate to the situation in the field.

Research Methods

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach with a case study design. In this qualitative research, the researcher conducts an in-depth and systematic analysis of the object being studied. (Fadli, 2021; Ramdhan, 2021; Sari et al., 2022). This

research involves collecting data through in-depth interviews with lecturers, students, and practitioners in the field of Islamic community development, as well as direct observation of program implementation in several Islamic universities in Indonesia. The purposive sampling technique is used to select informants who have knowledge and experience relevant to the research topic. In addition, document analysis of the curriculum, program reports, and related policies was also carried out to obtain a comprehensive overview of the perception and implementation of this study program. The collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis methods to identify the main patterns and themes that emerged, which were then used to prepare conclusions and recommendations related to the development of Islamic community development study programs.

Results and Discussion

Perception of the Islamic Community Development Study Program in Indonesia

The Islamic Community Development Study Program in Indonesia has historical roots that are closely related to the development of Islamic education and the community's need for social empowerment based on Islamic values. The program was born out of the awareness that Islamic education should be more than just religious teaching; It must be a tool to improve the quality of life of the people and answer the social, economic, and cultural challenges faced by society.

Initially, Islamic education in Indonesia focused more on theological and worship aspects. However, along with the development of the times and changes in the needs of society, there is an awareness of the importance of integrating Islamic education with social sciences and community empowerment. In the late 20th century, some Islamic colleges began to develop more holistic study programs, which taught not only religious science but also practical skills for social development.

One of the important milestones in this history was the establishment of study programs that combined Islamic principles with social science and development approaches. The State Islamic University (UIN) and several state Islamic religious institutes (IAIN) in Indonesia pioneered the establishment of the Islamic Community Development Study Program, which is designed to train students in identifying social problems, designing empowerment programs, and facilitating positive change in society.

The growth process of the Islamic community development study program has received a positive response from education providers and the general public. This is evidenced by the increase in the number of existing study programs. Until 2023, there are at least 22 study programs spread across various Islamic universities in Indonesia.

Along with the rapid growth of Islamic community development science, various challenges arise both in terms of academics and terms of the benefits of its graduates. These challenges are a natural part of the evolution of science.

Currently, the Islamic community development study program has become one of the study programs that are in great demand in Islamic universities, especially in the faculty of Da'wah and Communication. However, even though it is popular in the

scientific field, there are still many obstacles faced, especially related to limitations in the postgraduate education level.

Until 2023, there are only three universities that offer postgraduate programs in the development of Islamic society, consisting of three master's programs at Raden Intan State Islamic University Lampung, Imam Bonjol Padang State Islamic University, and Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, as well as one doctoral program at Raden Intan State Islamic University Lampung.

The many Islamic community development study programs in Indonesia have given rise to various perceptions, both among academics and the general public. This perception is reflected in several aspects as follows:

First, there is a view that the basic concept of the Islamic community development study program involves a combination of social science studies and Islamic studies. Some believe that the development of Islamic society is a study in the field of da'wah, as well as other views that consider it a study within the framework of Islamic science for development.

Second, there is a view that Islam in the context of the development of Islamic society is an object that causes its focus to be only on Islamic society. On the other hand, there is an opinion that states that "Islam" in the development of Islamic society is an adjective that indicates that the development of this society is general.

Third, there is a view that all Islamic community development study programs in Indonesia must have uniformity in terms of science, curriculum, practice, and cooperation with other institutions so that the characteristics of each Islamic community development study program in each university become general.

Fourth, there is a view of alumni from Islamic community development study programs who are often considered to have only skills in da'wah, so the community development carried out tends to be monotonous and exclusive in society.

Raden Intan State Islamic University Lampung is a pioneer in the establishment of an Islamic community development study program. At first, the establishment of this study program was not easy because it was not widely known like other study programs. During the initiation period, the development of Islamic society was often associated with da'wah science, thus attracting the interest of students equivalent to Madrasah Aliyah graduates or students from Islamic boarding schools who wanted to continue their education to a higher level.

The marketing of Islamic community development science emphasizes the value of da'wah as an advantage offered to the community, with the main target being the Muslim community. As a pioneer in Islamic community development study programs, these efforts are not only limited to the undergraduate level but also extend to graduate programs. From the results of the researcher's observations, Raden Intan State Islamic University Lampung is recorded as the first university to open a postgraduate master's program and the only one that holds a doctoral program in the field of Islamic community development.

The second is the development of Islamic communities in the Eastern Indonesia Region, especially at the Alauddin State Islamic University of Makassar. The initial process of developing the science of Islamic community development here turns out to be more complex than elsewhere. This study program was first formed on March 23, 1999, with the initial goal of developing the values of da'wah science. However, as time goes by, there is a significant decrease in student interest from year to year. In 2006, there was a drastic decline in the number of students who chose Islamic community development programs.

Seeing these conditions, several lecturers deliberated to develop a strategy so that this program remains relevant and not deleted. As a result of these discussions, they proposed to focus on specific areas of science.

The change of name of Islamic Community Development with Social Welfare Concentration was finally implemented in 2007. This strategy has proven to be effective in increasing student interest in this program. In addition to successfully attracting student interest, the focus on social welfare in the Islamic Community Development study program also opens up opportunities for cooperation with various government agencies.

Some of the institutions that have successfully collaborated with the Islamic Community Development Study Program include the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, the South Sulawesi Provincial General Election Commission, the South Sulawesi Provincial Population and Family Planning Agency, and others. This collaboration is considered an important achievement for the Development of the Islamic Society at Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar, which resulted in an adjustment in their scientific structure. When reviewing the curriculum, the subjects offered are adjusted to the needs of government and private institutions that have collaborated through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

The name of the Islamic Community Development program with a concentration on Social Welfare only lasted for a decade. This happens because some lecturers want the formation of a new study program by breaking down existing concentrations. The plan for this solution started in 2015, and finally, in 2018, the Islamic Community Development study program was officially separated from the Social Welfare study program based on a Decree from the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education (Kemenristek Dikti).

The separation of study programs has affected fluctuations in student interest, but until 2021, accreditation data from the Islamic Community Development of Alauddin State Islamic University of Makassar shows that student interest remains stable. In fact, in the same year, it won the title of A (Excellent) accreditation.

The development of the Islamic community at one of the leading universities on the island of Java, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, shows a unique and extraordinary process in the establishment of the Islamic Community Development undergraduate program. The university managed to record the best achievement in the history of the program's establishment.

Since its inception in 1998, the program has undergone a significant scientific transformation. In addition to prioritizing da'wah science, this program also emphasizes social and social sciences both in concept and practice.

The development of the Islamic Community Development study program at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University has different challenges from other universities, which results in its rapid development with few obstacles. State Islamic University has shown its progress by building many cooperative partnerships, both at home and abroad. Since 2021, the Sunan Kalijaga Islamic Community Development program has applied for international accreditation from the Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA), along with 18 other study programs.

This long process lasted until October 2022, then a few months after UIN Sunan Kalijaga received international accreditation for the Islamic Community Development Study Program. The achievements achieved by the Islamic Community Development undergraduate program do not stop there. On February 2, 2023, UIN Sunan Kalijaga officially launched the master's program in Islamic Community Development along with the master's program in Islamic Guidance and Counseling.

During the research on the development process of Islamic society in Indonesia, the analysis conducted showed that there were similarities in the obstacles faced by universities, but the strategies used to overcome these obstacles varied. The results obtained also vary according to geographical conditions and individual needs.

The main challenge faced by universities that have Islamic Community Development Study Programs is the decline in student interest. This factor can be caused by several things. First, the public's perception of the usefulness of graduates of this program may not be completely clear or directly visible in the job market. Students are often more likely to choose a study program that is considered to have a clearer career prospect immediately after graduation.

Second, the lack of adequate promotion and information regarding the benefits and relevance of the Islamic Community Development Study Program can also be the cause of a decrease in interest. Many prospective students may not fully understand the career potential and contributions they can make after completing the program.

In addition, competition with other study programs that are more popular or that have a more general and broad approach to education can also be a challenge. Students tend to choose courses that offer flexibility in their careers and the opportunity to contribute to different fields of work.

To address these challenges, universities need to increase promotion and information regarding the benefits and career opportunities offered by the Islamic Society Development Study Program. They also need to constantly update their curriculum and teaching methods to ensure that they meet the demands and needs of the current job market. Collaboration with industry, community organizations, and government agencies is also important to ensure that graduates of this program have relevant and necessary skills and knowledge in the field. With this strategy, it is hoped that students' interest in

the Islamic Community Development Study Program can increase again, while still fulfilling the mission to build a better society based on Islamic values.

The implications of the research findings on the Islamic Community Development Study Program have an important impact on higher education policy in Indonesia. First, these findings show the need for increased investment in curriculum development that is responsive to the social and economic needs of the community, as well as the integration of Islamic values in the context of sustainable development. Higher education policies should strengthen frameworks that support relevant curriculum innovation and practice-based learning to ensure graduates can face global and local challenges with better preparedness.

Advice for higher education policymakers is to increase financial and administrative support for Islamic Community Development study programs. This can be done by increasing budget allocation for the development of learning facilities, applied research, and internships for students. In addition, policymakers also need to encourage closer collaboration between universities, government agencies, and the private sector to create opportunities for fruitful cooperation in the application of the knowledge and skills acquired in these study programs. Furthermore, policy development must consider incentives for universities that successfully adapt their study programs to the needs of the community and the job market and promote excellence in community empowerment based on Islamic values. Thus, higher education policies can play an active role in supporting and developing the Islamic Community Development Study Program to meet the challenges and expectations of the current and future Indonesian society.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion in each of the previous sub-chapters, the researcher concluded that there was a significant variation in the perception of the Islamic Community Development Study Program from various perspectives. These differences include the basic concepts, objectives, directions, object studies, and their implementation in academic and social practice. In addition, this study program faces various challenges and dynamics in its development. The main challenges faced include a decline in student interest due to a lack of flexibility in adapting science to the times and variations in perceptions about the concept and benefits of Islamic Community Development. Nevertheless, several universities that have succeeded in transforming and integrating social sciences with Islamic values in their curriculum, can maintain and increase the attractiveness and relevance of this study program. This conclusion underscores the importance of adapting to the changing times and the needs of society to ensure the sustainability and usefulness of the Islamic Community Development Study Program in the future.

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