

MINIMIZING THE SCARCITY OF ULAMA IN THE DISRUPTION ERA: Existence and Strategy of Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Preparing Ulama

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Abstract: The scarcity of ulama is a major concern in Islamic education because the higher education system is no longer considered adequate to produce graduates with a deep understanding of religion according to the demands of the times. This research aims to analyze the ulama regeneration program in Medan, focusing on the existence, materials, learning strategies, and obstacles faced. This research was conducted at the Higher Education for the Cadre of Ulama of the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra and Al-Washliyah University. The research method used is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. Data analysis uses Miles and Huberman techniques supported by Atlas Ti software. The results revealed that in Islamic higher institutions in Medan City there are two ulama regeneration institutions, namely under the auspices of the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra which has been established since 2006 and under the auspices of Al-Washliyah University which was established in 2022. The dominant regeneration material is Islamic science based on classical Islamic books (turast). The dominant learning strategy is completing the book, supported by research and community service activities. In the implementation, there are internal constraints in the form of student input, budget limitations and external constraints are the misalignment of internal and government curricula. This research has implications for practical recommendations for Islamic higher education institutions to strengthen their capacity to produce competent scholars

Keywords: Scarcity of Ulama, Regeneration of Ulama, Islamic Higher Education

Abstrak: Krisis ulama menjadi perhatian utama dalam pendidikan Islam karena sistem pendidikan tinggi dianggap tidak lagi memadai untuk menghasilkan lulusan dengan pemahaman agama yang mendalam sesuai tuntutan zaman. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis program kaderisasi ulama di Medan, dengan fokus pada eksistensi, materi, strategi pembelajaran, dan kendala yang dihadapi. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan pada Pendidikan tinggi kaderisasi ulama majelis ulama Indonesia Sumatera Utara dan Universitas Al-Washliyah. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi. Analisis data menggunakan teknik Miles dan Huberman didukung Software Atlas Ti. Hasil penelitian menungkapkan bahwa lembaga tinggi Islam Kota Medan terdapat dua lembaga kaderisasi ulama yakni di bawah naungan Majelis Ulama Indonesia Sumatera Utara yang berdiri sejak 2006 dan Universitas Al-Washliyah yang berdiri sejak 2022. Materi kaderisasi dominan keilmuan Islam berbasis kitab islam klasik (turast). Strategi pembelajaran dominan menamatkan kitab, didukung dengan kegiatan penelitian dan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat. Dalam pelaksanaan terdapat kendala internal berupa input mahasiswa, keterbatasan anggaran dan kendala eksternal adalah ketidakselarasan kurikulum internal dan pemerintah. Penelitian ini berimplikasi pada Rekomendasi praktis bagi lembaga pendidikan tinggi Islam untuk memperkuat kapasitas mencetak ulama yang kompeten.

Kata Kunci: Krisis Ulama, Regenerasi Ulama, Pendidikan Tinggi Islam

INTRODUCTION

The fear of a ulama scarcity in Indonesia is not a new issue, because in 2013 the Minister of Religion Surya Dharma Ali predicted it, it was marked by the decline in the interest of the Indonesian people to send their children to Islamic boarding schools. Continuing in 2022, Minister of Religion Yaquut Kholil Qoumas also predicted the same thing, it was marked by the lack of turast studies in Islamic religious universities. This concern is important to overcome, because Indonesia has a majority Muslim population and a large enough area, so it requires many figures of Religious Experts who are able to guide to the correct understanding of religion (Huda, 2022).

The scarcity faced by Islamic religious universities is not entirely to blame, considering that these universities are at the intersection of two complex demands. On the one hand, internal demands expect Islamic religious universities to be the locomotive for the development of Islamic sciences and as a place that grows religious expert graduates, including sowing seeds of ulama. On the other hand, external demands, especially in the era of 21st century modernization and disruption, require these universities to produce graduates who are ready to compete in various job positions. This condition causes the curriculum and goal orientation to be not maximized in producing graduates who are truly experts in the field of religion.

In line with that, the process of regeneration of ulama also faces great challenges in the era of disruption, which can cause students in Islamic higher education institutions to lose their future orientation. The era of disruption, with all its demands for continuous innovation, forces students to abandon classical things (Ridwan, 2019). This is contrary to the process of regeneration of scholars, which requires students to study books or classical works of scholars. However, the regeneration of scholars must also be able to adapt to changing times through the integration of digital literacy education, so that prospective scholars remain relevant in the modern context without ignoring the classical Islamic scientific heritage. This combination of internal and external demands makes the challenges for Islamic religious universities more complex, especially in maintaining the balance between tradition and innovation.

Azyumardi Azra as a figure who initiated the birth of the State Islamic University, has long anticipated this through a breakthrough in scientific integration. However, it seems that the breakthrough, according to Hasan Asari, was not able to surpass the higher goal of regenerating scholars (*tafaqquh fiddin*). The integration is only limited to the concept of producing graduates who master general and Islamic sciences in an integrated manner, not the concept of producing graduates who are experts and master the field of religious science. (Bustamam, 2016).

With regard to this problem, the Faculty of Islamic Studies of Al-Washliyah University Medan and the Higher Education for Ulama Cadres of the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra have paid serious attention by creating a special class program for the regeneration of Ulama. The emergence of this program stems from concerns about the existence and image of Al-Washliyah and the Indonesian Ulama Council, which has been known as a gathering place for Medan City scholars. The study program with a concentration on the regeneration of scholars is distinctive in terms of input, graduate profile, learning process, and output.

Cadre of ulama refers to the process of preparing the next generation of ulama with comprehensive Islamic knowledge, a deep understanding of religion, and the skills to address the challenges of the ummah in the future. Basically, the goal of ulama regeneration is to create ulama who: (1) have a deep understanding of Islamic knowledge, including traditional and contemporary religious sciences, (2) are able to understand and respond to the challenges faced by the ummah in the future, both in the aspects of thought, da'wah, education, politics, economics, and culture, (3) have a positive personality, have high morals, and become role models for the ummah (Napitupulu et al., 2023).

In the Medan city area, there are many Islamic universities and even one state Islamic religious university, but not

all of these universities have a concentration of special study programs for the regeneration of ulama. In fact, as stated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 3 of 2020 concerning National Higher Education Standards, it is stated that universities may organize education that supports the creation of a comprehensive and broad mindset by internalizing the distinctiveness, excellence and local and national wisdom.

The availability of scholars is urgent, and it is not easy to create them. Ulama are not just people who master religious knowledge alone, but have an attitude like the attitude of the Prophet Muhammad Saw (Arjomand, 1981; Jamaa, 2018; Robinson, 2009; Sirry, 2013; Winter, 2009). This demand was responded to by Al-Washliyah University of Medan and the higher education of ulama cadres of the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra, and became the heavy work of study program managers, because in addition to facilitating learning, it also facilitates the creation of culture and scientific traditions from teachers who are authoritative with their religious knowledge. More interestingly, it relates to the ability of study program managers to adapt to modernization, so that there are ulama who are reliable in turast studies, and reliable in digital literacy (Kaptein, 2004; Nasir, 2014).

Based on these problems, this study aims to analyze the ulama regeneration program at Islamic higher

education institutions in Medan city, with a research focus on four things, namely existence, learning materials, learning strategies, and obstacles in organizing the program. The orientation of the focus of the study boils down to the best practice of ulama cadre through Islamic higher education institutions. In this study, what is meant by existence is the existence and active role of higher education for ulama cadres in the academic environment in the Medan City area as a forum for higher education-based ulama regeneration. What is meant by learning materials and strategies is the content and steps set by lecturers in learning in the ulama regeneration class. Then the obstacles in this study mean the challenges faced by ulama cadre higher education in regenerating higher education-based ulama.

This research examines the existence and strategies of Islamic higher education

institutions in overcoming the ulama scarcity in the era of disruption. This research offers a new perspective on the adaptation of institutions to changing times through the development of innovative ulama regeneration programs. In addition, this research provides practical recommendations for producing scholars who are competent and relevant to the challenges of modernity while adhering to Islamic principles, contributing to the sustainability of the scholarly tradition.

This research theme certainly has a distinction from other studies, to find out, the *publish or perish software* version 8.4.4041.8250 and VOSViewer version 1.6.1.9 are used. The database used was the Scopus index page, with the keyword 'ulama'. The search successfully identified 200 *papers* related to the *keyword*. The identification results are visualized using Vosviewer, the results are as follows:

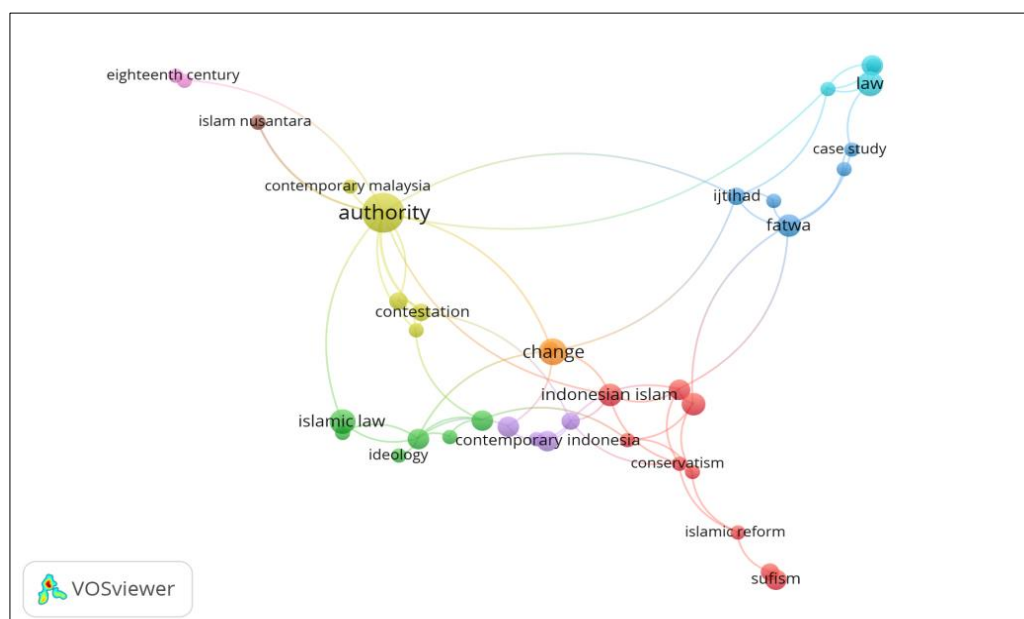


Figure 1. VOSviewer Visualization of Topic Research Distribution
Scopus Indexed Scholars

Based on the figure above, it appears that the topic of research on ulama is dominant in ulama authority, Islamic law, fatwa, and Sufism. While the topic of Ulama regeneration has not been touched at all in previous research. Of course this research has a novelty or novelty that is so great, because the results that are still *fresh* will contribute to the treasures of Islamic education, thus adding to the theoretical and practical stretches in regenerating scholars.

In addition, the focus of this research has significant differences compared to previous relevant research. To identify these differences, relevant research will be traced based on two keywords, namely (1) the ulama scarcity in Indonesia, and (2) the regeneration of ulama at Islamic higher education institutions. The results of relevant research will be analyzed to determine the differences in the focus of the study. Some relevant research related to the first keyword include: (1) Islamic education policy in the New Order era that highlighted the madrasah aliyah special program as a cadre of religious leaders. (Huda, 2022); (2) the scarcity of West Sumatra ulama related to the lack of ulama who are able to write in Islamic boarding schools (Bustamam, 2016)(3) the ulama scarcity in the Muhammadiyah organization, and (4) Muhammadiyah's strategy in overcoming the ulama deficit (Palahuddin, 2022). This research is

different because it focuses on the scarcity of scholars produced by Islamic higher education institutions. Then some relevant research related to the second kuni word are: (1) a historical study of the development of ulama regeneration in Indonesia (Darwis, 2020); (2) regeneration of scholars at the Islamic Center Wadi Mubarak Bogor with a focus on comprehensive mentoring and learning (Wahid & Ishlahuddin, 2021), (3) regeneration of female scholars in Central Java (Malik, 2016), (4) curriculum development for the regeneration of Muhammadiyah tarjih scholars (Fihri et al., 2023), and (5) strengthening fiqh in the regeneration of ulama in Islamic boarding school (Muchsin, 2016). In contrast to previous studies, this research focuses on the role of Islamic higher education institutions in the ulama cadre program in the era of disruption.

Concretely, it seems that these two keywords are still very rarely researched. Even though it is very rare, it does not mean that this study is not urgent. In fact, this study is very urgent, for the reason that the existence of scholars is the responsibility of Islamic higher education institutions, besides that the policy in the form of Minister of Education and Culture No. 3 of 2020 concerning National Higher Education Standards provides space for higher education institutions to organize education with their respective

characteristics. Moreover, in the era of disruption, which is unpredictable at any time, of course Islamic higher education institutions must always be aware of all shifts in the profile of graduates, which causes Islamic religious university to no longer have an image in producing Ulama.

METHOD

This type of research is *field research* that uses qualitative research methods and phenomenological study approaches. The choice of phenomenology as an approach on the grounds that the ulama scarcity is considered a new phenomenon in the development of Islamic education. The existence of a higher education-based Ulama regeneration institution has begun to be looked at by many parties, even now it is starting to be seriously initiated by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (Creswell, 2012). According to Creswell, phenomenological studies assume that each individual experiences a phenomenon with all his awareness. In that case, the phenomenological study seeks to explore the deepest awareness of the subjects regarding their experience in an event. In short, phenomenological studies seek answers about the meaning of a phenomenon based on the subject's experience. The meaning of the ulama scarcity and the experience of implementing the higher education-based ulama regeneration

program organized by the higher education ulama cadres of the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra and Al-Washliyah University will be the starting point for researchers to explore this research. (Creswell, 2007).

This research was conducted at the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) of North Sumatra Province and Al-Washliyah University, both of which are administratively located in Medan City. The reason for choosing this location is because in the last three years (2021, 2022, and 2023) the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) of North Sumatra Province has responded to the phenomenon of the ulama scarcity by organizing higher education-based ulama regeneration education. This activity has also become the highlight of many parties, because it is considered positive and even received positive appreciation from the Ministry of Religion. Of course it is very reasonable if the existence, material, strategies and obstacles faced by the regeneration education are researched, the results of which become formulations for the implementation of other Islamic religious universities, or maybe also formulations for foreign countries. In terms of time, this research was carried out for approximately eight months, starting from January to August 2023.

The data sources in this research consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from main

and supporting informants. The main informants totaled 8 people from each institution, consisting of 2 leaders, 3 lecturers, and 3 students. Supporting informants consisted of 3 people from the community. Secondary data sources

included supporting documents such as policies, learning tools and materials, and literature supporting the theoretical study of this research. Further details are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Details of Research Data Sources

No.	Data source	Type of data source	Description	Total
1	Primary	- Key Informant	- Academic leader	2
			- Lecturer of ulama regeneration	3
			- Student regeneration of ulama	3
		- Supporting Informants	- Community	3
2	Secondary	- Learning tools	- Semester learning plan	1
		- Curriculum	- Material Distribution	1
		- Documentation	- News/website coverage	2
		- Library Materials	- Articles, modules, books	20
		- Consideration	- Government policy	2

Data collection was carried out using observation, interview and documentation study techniques. Observation was carried out by directly observing the process of regeneration of ulama through learning in higher education carried out by the higher education of ulama cadres of the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra and Al-Washliyah University. Interviews were conducted with 11 main and supporting informants using a structured interview method. Documentation studies were carried out by analyzing learning tools, curriculum, learning materials and TOT, documentation of activities, library materials and policy considerations related to the regeneration of ulama.

The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman technique, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing. To ensure the validity of the data, researchers used several techniques, namely data triangulation, prolonging observation, increasing persistence in the data analysis process. Presentation of findings and discussion is done with descriptive-analytical techniques, namely first the findings are described, then analyzed using the theoretical basis and comparing with relevant research findings. With regard to the phenomenological approach, here is the chart: With regard to the phenomenological approach the following chart:

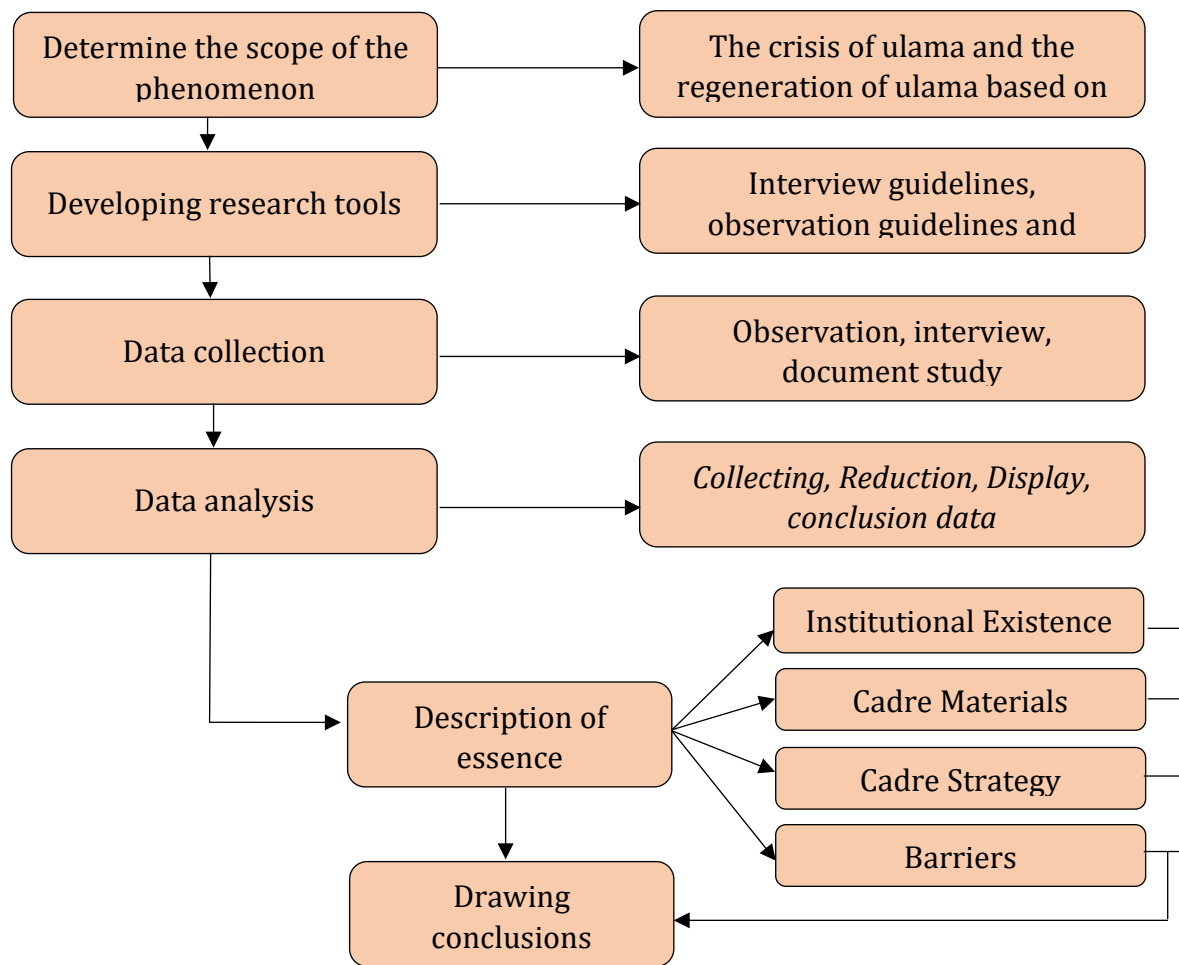


Figure 2. Schematic of Phenomenological Research Procedure based on Creswell's theory

Results and Discussion

The results of research observations show that there are three things that become the basis for the existence of the ulama regeneration program at Islamic higher education institutions in Medan

city, namely the existence of institutions or study programs, the availability of teachers, the availability of students, and the ongoing teaching and learning process. The following are the results of these observations:

Table 2. Observation Results

No.	Aspect/activity	Description
1	Existence of the institution or study program	The ulama regeneration program at the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra called the higher education of North Sumatra ulama cadres was established in 2006, while the ulama regeneration program at Al-Washliyah University was established in 2022.
2	Teacher availability	The teaching staff in the Ulama Cadre Program of the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra comes from internal who are also teaching staff at Islamic religious universities, and on average are also teaching staff at the

	State Islamic University of North Sumatra Medan, and preferably those who come from the Middle East or who master the turast book. While the teaching staff at Al-Washliyah University are permanent lecturers of study programs within the faculty of Islamic Religion, and prioritized those who master the turast.
3 Student availability	Students in the Ulama Cadre Program of the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra come from delegates of the Indonesian Ulama Council in regencies/cities under the province of North Sumatra. Meanwhile, students at Al-Washliyah University are recruited and organized based on their ability to read the turast.
The teaching and learning process takes place	The Indonesian Ulama Council continues to exist in organizing the ulama regeneration program until now and the length of study lasts for three years and has the title of associate expert. Likewise, Al-Washliyah University is still organizing and the study lasts for four years and has a bachelor's degree.

The research findings based on the results of interviews with eleven main and supporting informants will be presented with processed data atlas Ti. The interview about this existence targets five questions, namely the background of the establishment of the

institution, the validity of the standing permit, the orientation of the implementation, the source of funds for the implementation, the development of the institution to date. For more details, the following are the results of the data analysis:

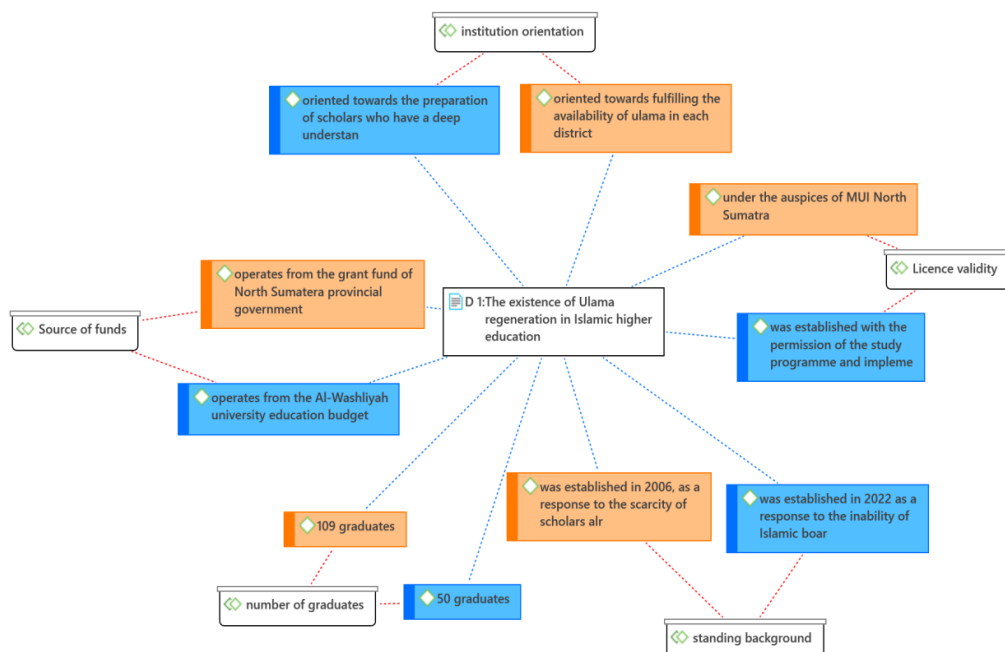


Figure 3. Atlas data coding ti interviews on the existence of Ulama regeneration at the North Sumatra Ulama Council (orange) and Al-Washliyah Medan university (blue).

Based on the picture above, it appears that the research findings on the existence of ulama regeneration at the North Sumatra Ulama Council and Al-Washliyah Medan University are grouped into five, namely: (1) the background of the establishment of the institution, the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra has a Ulama regeneration program since 2006 in response to the scarcity of ulama, while Al-Washliyah University has a Ulama regeneration program in 2022 in response to the inequality of pesantren in producing ulama; (2) implementation permit, the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra does not yet have an official permit and is currently only under the auspices of the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra, while Al-Washliyah University stands based on the study program permit and the regulation of the minister of education and culture of the republic of Indonesia No. 3 of 2020 concerning National Higher Education Standards provides room for higher education institutions to organize higher education. 3 of 2020 concerning National Higher Education Standards provides space for higher education institutions to organize education with their respective specialties; (3) organizing orientation, the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra is oriented towards fulfilling the availability of ulama in each district / city in North Sumatra, while at Al-Washliyah University it is oriented towards preparing ulama who have a deep understanding of religion; (4) the source of funds for organizing the regeneration of

ulama in the North Sumatra Ulama Council comes from the North Sumatra provincial government grant, while the source of funds at Al-Washliyah University comes from the university education budget; (5) currently the graduates of the regeneration of ulama at the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra are 109 people, and at Al-Washliyah University are 50 people.

Analysis of documents regarding the permit for the establishment of a Ulama regeneration education institution at the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra, it is based on a decree signed by the chairman of the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra in 2006, while at the Ulama regeneration education institution at Al-Washliyah University only as a form of distinctiveness of the Islamic religious education study program curriculum.

Furthermore, the results of research observations on Ulama regeneration materials at Islamic higher education institutions show that the content of turast studies is more dominant than modern studies. However, uniquely at the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra, students are equipped with modern knowledge oriented towards teaching skills, such as learning strategies, learning media, research methods, educational administration and so on. Likewise at Al-Washliyah University, but learning with digital modes is a new color in the regeneration of ulama in the university version of Al-Washliyah.

Research findings based on interviews with eleven main and supporting informants will be presented with processed data using the Atlas Ti application. Interviews about this existence

target three questions, namely the type of material, material content, and material sources. For more details, the following are the results of the data analysis:

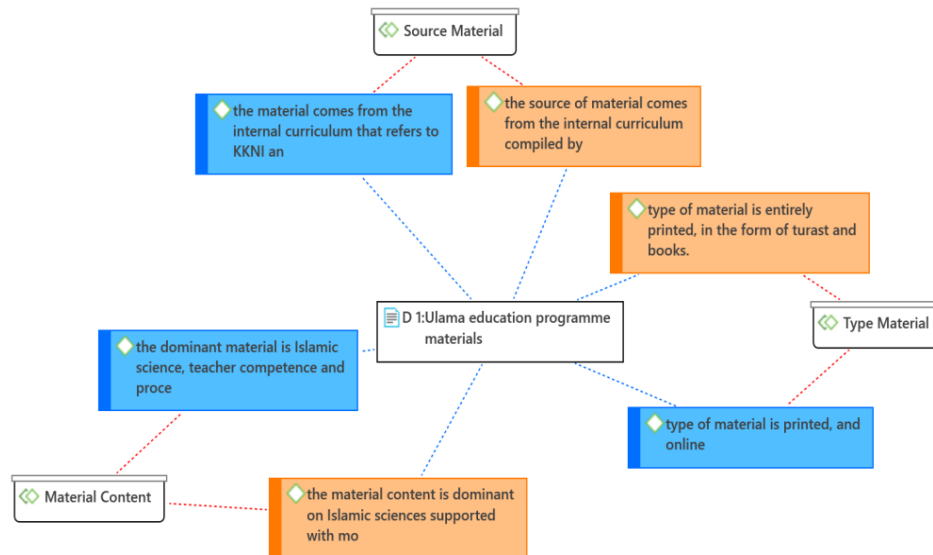


Figure 4. Atlas data coding ti interviews on Ulama regeneration materials at the North Sumatra Ulama Council (orange) and Al-Washliyah Medan university (blue).

Based on the figure above, it can be seen that the research findings on the material for the regeneration of scholars involve three things, namely the type of material, material content and material sources. In the Ulama Cadre Education of the North Sumatra Ulama Council, the type of material is entirely printed, in the form of turast and Islamic education books, both from external and internal essays of the lecturers concerned, while at Al-Washliyah University the type of material is printed, and online. Then at the North Sumatra Ulama Council the dominant material content is Islamic sciences supported by basic modern teaching skills, while at Al-Washliyah University the dominant material is Islamic science, teacher competence and proccessionality, and

scientific integration. Furthermore, in the ulama regeneration program of the North Sumatra Ulama Council, the source of material comes from the internal curriculum compiled by the team, while at Al Washliyah University the material comes from the internal curriculum which refers to the Indonesian national qualifications framework and independent learning independent campus.

Research findings from interviews with eleven key informants will be analyzed using Atlas Ti, focusing on ulama regeneration strategies at Islamic higher education institutions in Medan. The analysis addresses three main areas: classroom and extracurricular forms. Detailed results are as follows:

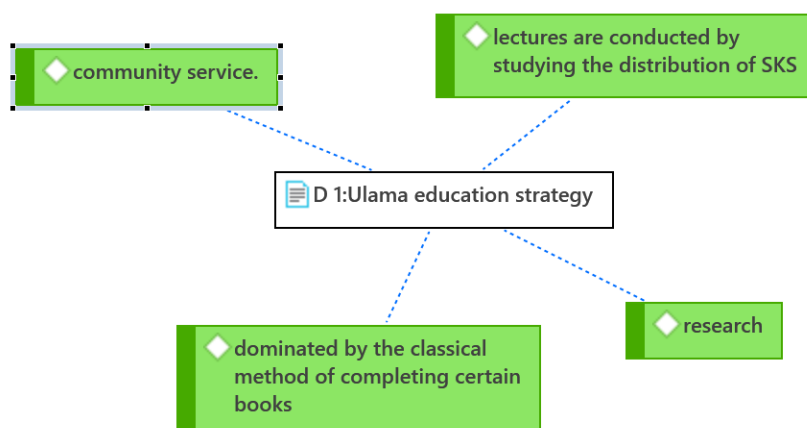


Figure 4. Atlas of interview data coding regarding Ulama regeneration strategies at Islamic higher education institutions in Medan city

Based on the picture above, it appears that the North Sumatra Ulama Council and Al-Washliyah University have similarities in the strategy of regenerating ulama, namely through lectures carried out by studying the distribution of credits, which is dominated by the classical method of completing certain books, and also following research and community service.

Research findings based on the results of interviews with eleven main and

supporting informants will be presented with processed data using the Atlas Ti application. Interviews about obstacles to the regeneration of ulama at Islamic higher education institutions in the city of Medan target two questions, namely internal kendala and external constraints. For more details, the following are the results of the data analysis:

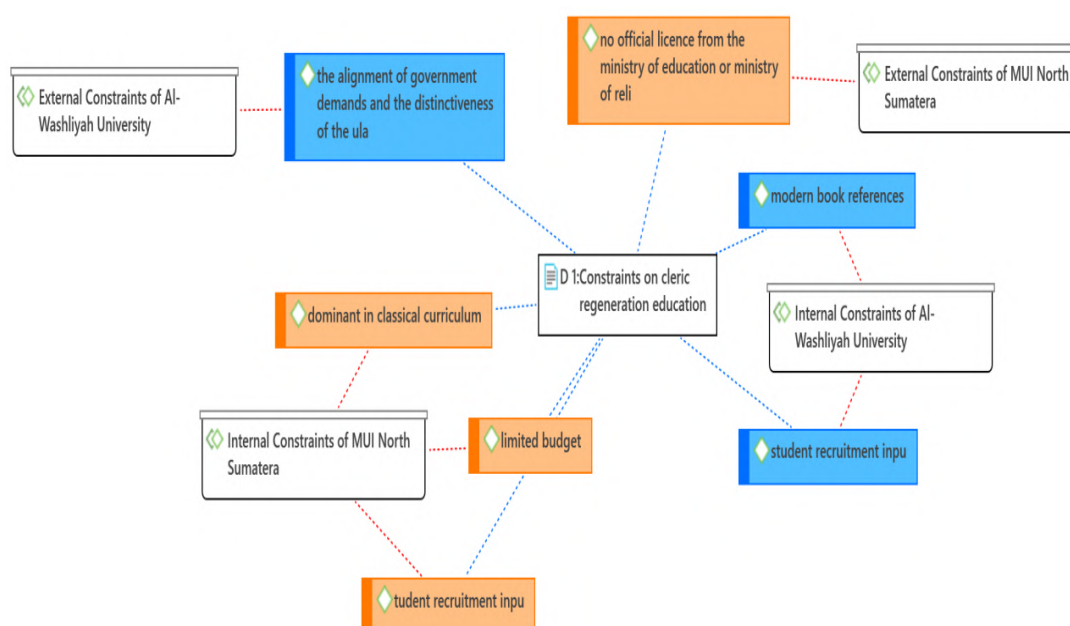


Figure 5. Atlas of interview data coding regarding obstacles to the regeneration of scholars at Islamic higher education institutions in Medan cityBased

On the picture above, it appears that the findings of this research reveal that the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra faces internal obstacles in the form of less than optimal student recruitment input, limited budget funds, and a curriculum that is still dominantly classical. On the external side, the Indonesian Ulama Council also experienced obstacles due to the absence of an official license from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Meanwhile, Alwashliyah University also faces internal challenges related to student recruitment input and limited modern book references. On the external side, the university has to adjust to the demands of the government while maintaining the distinctiveness of the ulama.

The existence of the Ulama regeneration program at Islamic higher education institutions in Medan city

The Ulama Cadre Program of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) of North Sumatra Province is an initiative that has shown its existence as a special institution that focuses on the cadre of ulama since 2006. The existence of this institution has important significance in responding to the Ulama scarcity and dissatisfaction with pesantren in producing Ulama graduates, especially in the North Sumatra region.

According to the theory of regeneration in religious education, a regeneration institution must have a

structured and planned system, which does not only rely on traditional approaches but is also able to adapt to the times. This view is supported by the opinions of Islamic education experts, such as Abdurrahman Mas'ud, who emphasizes that the regeneration of ulama must involve a holistic educational process, covering intellectual, spiritual and social aspects. (Mas'ud, 2020). The absence of an official permit for the cleric regeneration program under the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra is one of the major challenges that could hamper the credibility and effectiveness of this institution in the long run. On the other hand, Al-Washliyah University, which was established based on study program permits and official regulations from the Ministry of Education and Culture, has the advantage of clear legality, thus being able to guarantee the sustainability and quality of the programs it offers.

Contemporary Islamic education theory also emphasizes the importance of contextualization in Ulama regeneration programs. According to Ahmad Najib Burhani, Ulama education must be able to answer the challenges of the times by paying attention to the social, cultural and political contexts that develop in society. Cadre that only focuses on textual understanding of religion without touching on these aspects has the potential to produce scholars who are irrelevant to the needs of the people. (Burhani, 2019). In this case, the Ulama Cadre Program of the Indonesian Ulama Council of North

Sumatra needs to consider the integration of traditional religious education and contemporary studies that are more contextual. The lack of an official license not only hinders formal recognition but also potentially limits access to resources and collaboration with other, more established institutions, which is necessary to deliver a comprehensive and adaptive curriculum.

Previous studies that discuss the regeneration of ulama show that the formal legitimacy of an educational institution is very influential on the acceptance of the community and prospective ulama who are trained. Research by Muhammad Fahmi on the effectiveness of Ulama cadre programs in Indonesia states that programs that have strong legality support tend to be more accepted and produce graduates who have great influence in society. (Fahmi, 2013). This is in contrast to institutions that operate without official licenses, which often face difficulties in gaining support from various parties, including the government and the wider community.

Furthermore, research conducted by Zainal Abidin on the effect of legality of educational institutions on the quality of graduates found that institutions that have official licenses tend to be able to attract more qualified teaching staff. This happens because of the standards that must be met by the institution, both in terms of curriculum and other supporting facilities. (Abidin, 2023). In the context of the Ulama Cadre Program of the Indonesian Ulama

Council of North Sumatra, the absence of an official permit can reduce the attractiveness for potential ulama candidates and professional teaching staff, which in turn affects the quality of the graduates produced. Therefore, steps to obtain an official permit are not only a matter of administrative legality, but also a strategy to improve the overall quality of the program.

The establishment of the Ulama Cadre Program of the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra is an important step in responding to the need for ulama regeneration in the province. However, the lack of an official license is an issue that needs to be addressed to ensure that the program can run better and gain wider support. A comparison with Al-Washliyah University shows that having clear legality not only provides operational security but also increases public confidence in the program. Therefore, the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra needs to consider striving for formal legality for this ulama regeneration program, in order to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the ulama cadre in the future.

Ulama regeneration material at Islamic higher education institutions in Medan city

The Ulama Cadre Education of the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra and Al-Washliyah University show significant differences in terms of the type and content of learning materials, which reflect the different approaches in producing religious scholars and

professionals. At the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra, the learning materials used are entirely print-based, with an emphasis on the yellow book and Islamic education books. This material, which is largely derived from the classical Islamic scholarly tradition, has high historical value and is considered the primary source in understanding Islamic texts. The use of the yellow Islamic classic books shows a commitment to the maintenance of the authentic Islamic scientific tradition, as stated by Azra, that understanding the original sources is very important in maintaining the purity of Islamic teachings amid the onslaught of modernity (Azra, 2012). (Azra, 2012). However, it also presents challenges, especially in integrating this knowledge with modern contexts that require new skills and interdisciplinary approaches.

In contrast, Al-Washliyah University adopts a more modern approach by combining print and online materials. This is in line with the theory of Constructivism proposed by Piaget, which states that effective learning occurs when students can construct their knowledge through various sources and experiences. (Ondog & Kilag, 2023).. The use of online materials allows wider access to various sources of information, supporting the integration of Islamic knowledge with other disciplines, such as professional competencies and technological skills. This signifies Al-Washliyah University's commitment to preparing graduates who are not only experts in Islamic knowledge

but also able to compete in an increasingly digital professional world.

The Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra emphasizes Islamic sciences with the support of basic modern sciences and teaching skills. This approach is supported by traditional Islamic educational theory, which emphasizes the importance of a deep understanding of classical texts as the primary basis for the formation of ulama. According to al-Ghazali, a scholar must have a deep mastery of the Islamic sciences before studying other sciences, to ensure that all knowledge acquired is in line with Islamic principles. (Asari, 2012).

Al-Washliyah University, on the other hand, adds a broader dimension to its curriculum, which includes teacher competence and professionalism as well as scientific integration. This approach is not only in line with Indonesia's National Qualifications Framework and Merdeka Kampus Merdeka Learning, but also shows an attempt to integrate Islamic knowledge with the needs of the modern labor market. Ramachandran's research shows that graduates who have interdisciplinary skills and a deep understanding of the global context are better prepared to face the challenges of a complex world of work. (Ramachandran et al., 2024)..

The distinction between these two institutions lies not only in the type and source of learning materials but also in the underlying educational philosophy. The Indonesian Ulama Council of North

Sumatra is more focused on developing ulama who are experts in traditional Islamic sciences, while Al-Washliyah University integrates Islamic sciences with professional competencies, reflecting a more adaptive approach to the demands of the times.

Related research also shows that an approach that combines Islamic knowledge with modern skills, as practiced by Al-Washliyah University, is more effective in producing graduates who are able to contribute in various sectors, both in religious and non-religious fields. A study by Intan and Saguni concluded that this integration increases graduates' competitiveness in the global job market, while maintaining their Islamic identity. (Intan & Saguni, 2024). Thus, it can be concluded that although the two institutions have different approaches, both contribute significantly in producing a generation of scholars and professionals who are able to answer the challenges of the times, both in local and global contexts.

Ulama regeneration strategy at Islamic higher education institutions in Medan city

The education for Ulama regeneration at the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra and Al-Washliyah University stands out in their integrated approach, which includes a structured lecture system and the use of classical methods in learning. This strategy combines a tightly regulated

distribution of courses with a semester credit system, which ensures that each learner goes through a systematic and in-depth academic path.

According to the perspective of Islamic education, as expressed by Syah and Salsabila, the purpose of Islamic education is to form civilized people, namely individuals who have an awareness of their position in life, both in relationships with God and with fellow humans. (Syah & Salsabila, 2023).. The process of regeneration of scholars that combines structured courses and yellowclassical book learning is in line with this goal. The yellow book itself has been recognized by many scholars as the main source covering various Islamic disciplines, such as fiqh, tafsir, hadith, and akidah. Azra adds that the education of scholars through classical methods such as the teaching of the yellowIslamic classic book is one of the efforts to maintain the sustainability of the Islamic scientific tradition. (Azra, 2005). It also allows prospective scholars to understand and access the authentic and deep treasures of Islamic scholarship, which are needed in facing the challenges of modernity. Thus, the use of the yellowIslamic classic book is not only a medium of learning but also an important means in shaping the ulama's ability to analyze contemporary issues with a deep classical perspective.

Research conducted by Reynolds on the effectiveness of the yellow book teaching method in the education of scholars shows that this method has the

advantage of honing students' analytical and critical abilities. Reynolds emphasizes that the study of the yellowIslamic classic book allows students to develop in-depth legal istinbath (law-making) skills, which are indispensable for becoming a competent scholar. (Reynolds, 2023). In addition, research from Hidayah highlighted that ulama education based on the teaching of the yellowclassical books and supported by a systematic curriculum contributes significantly in shaping the character and moral integrity of prospective ulama. (Hidayah, 2023). The results of this study indicate that graduates of the ulama regeneration program have better abilities in leading Islamic communities and addressing socio-religious challenges compared to those who did not attend yellow book-based education.

Overall, ulama regeneration education at the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra and Al-Washliyah University has its own uniqueness and advantages in forming competent and insightful ulama. The approach that combines classical learning with a modern academic system has proven effective in maintaining the Islamic scholarly tradition, while preparing ulama to play a role in an ever-evolving society. Relevant research also supports the effectiveness of this strategy in forming scholars who are able to face contemporary challenges with a strong Islamic scientific foundation.

Obstacles to Ulama regeneration in Islamic higher education institutions in Medan city

Ulama regeneration education at the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra and Al-Washliyah University faces a number of internal and external challenges. Internal constraints at the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra include sub-optimal student recruitment inputs, which can affect the quality of graduates. According to *Human Capital* theory, the quality of inputs strongly influences the final outcome of education, where under-qualified students can lower output standards. In this context, the lack of recruitment qualifications can lead to stagnation of knowledge development in educational institutions, especially in the religious field, which requires a strong knowledge base from the start. (Guryeva et al., 2023).. In addition, the limited funding budget is a serious obstacle that limits the development of curriculum and educational infrastructure. Siroj Abdullah's opinion emphasizes that a lack of budget can slow down curriculum innovation and renewal of teaching methods, which in turn can reduce the competitiveness of the educational institution. The predominantly classical curriculum is also a significant internal challenge. In Abdurrahman Wahid's view, the classical curriculum has important value in maintaining the Islamic scientific tradition, but it must be balanced with contemporary material to suit the needs

of the times. A curriculum that focuses too much on the yellow book and classical texts, without any updates, can result in graduates who are not ready to face modern challenges.

Externally, the Indonesian Ulama Council faces a major obstacle in the absence of an official license from the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This results in the ulama regeneration program not having a strong legal basis to be formally recognized by the state. Legitimization from national education authorities is essential to ensure recognition and support, both in the form of regulation and funding. (Wirthová & Barták, 2023).. Al-Washliyah University, on the other hand, also faces similar challenges related to student recruitment input. In the context of higher education, low-quality student input is often associated with inadequate output, resulting in low competitiveness of graduates in the job market.

In addition, the limited reference of modern books at Al-Washliyah University exacerbates the situation, as this hinders students from understanding the context of Islam in the modern world. According to constructivism theory, relevant and contextualized learning is essential to help students link old knowledge with new knowledge. The lack of modern references can limit students' ability to think critically and apply knowledge in a broader context.

Both institutions, the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra and Al-

Washliyah University, are in a position that requires fundamental reform, both internally and externally. Expert opinion and theoretical analysis suggest that without renewal and innovation, Ulama regeneration education in these two institutions could lose relevance amid social change and the increasingly complex demands of the times. Therefore, a concerted effort is needed to improve the quality of recruitment, optimize the budget, update the curriculum, and gain formal legitimacy from the government.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that in Medan city, there are two Islamic higher education institutions that organize the regeneration of ulama: Majelis Ulama Indonesia North Sumatra and Al-Washliyah University. The Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra, which was established in 2006, is oriented towards fulfilling the needs of ulama with a dominant approach to turastical studies, although it also includes modern science related to teaching skills. Al-Washliyah University, established in 2022, focuses on preparing ulama with a deep understanding of religion as well as the integration of digital and modern learning. Furthermore, the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra does not yet have an official license and relies on provincial government grants, while Al-Washliyah University operates with a license according to the Ministry of Education and Culture regulations, as well as funds from the university budget. The

Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra has graduated 109 people, while Al-Washliyah University graduated 50. Both institutions face internal challenges: Majelis Ulama Indonesia North Sumatra with sub-optimal student recruitment, budget constraints, and a classical curriculum; Al-Washliyah University with limited recruitment and references to modern books. Externally, the Indonesian Ulama Council of North Sumatra faces obstacles due to the absence of an official license, while Al-Washliyah University must adjust to government demands while maintaining the distinctiveness of the ulama. The implication of this research shows that to increase the effectiveness of ulama regeneration, MUI North Sumatra needs to update the curriculum and strengthen the digital aspect, while Al-Washliyah University must strengthen classical knowledge and expand modern references.

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