

ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN POST-CONFLICT ACEH: Generation Z Students, Religious Knowledge and Professional Interests

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Abstract: This study examines the recent developments of Islamic higher education in post-conflict Aceh. Government data indicate that Indonesia is poised to enter a demographic bonus era soon, where the productive-age population will outnumber the non-productive-age population. Currently, 27.94% of Indonesia's population comprises Generation Z, individuals born between 1997 and 2012. With pragmatic and realistic characteristics, this group, now aged 12-27, is engaged in secondary and tertiary education. Within this context, the study explores the professional interests of Generation Z in contemporary Aceh. As a qualitative investigation, the study reveals that the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FTIK) at IAIN Lhokseumawe remains a popular choice among Generation Z, particularly the Islamic Religious Education program (PAI), despite challenges in retaining re-entrant. Additionally, the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business (FEBI) has seen increased interest, especially in the Sharia Economics (ES) program, while the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab and Da'wah (FUAD) and the Faculty of Sharia (FASYA) demonstrate varied levels of interest. Key factors influencing program choice among Generation Z, based on a survey of new students, include the desire to deepen knowledge of Islamic studies, future career prospects, and family influence.

Keywords: generation Z student, Islamic higher education, religious knowledge, professional interests

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Introduction

The topic of religious sciences in Islamic higher education and Generation Z's interest in these fields represents a contemporary and unique area of study.¹ Historically, various Islamic educational institutions have contributed to the development of religious sciences in the Muslim world. For example, Bayt al-Hikmah during the Abbasid Dynasty was an Islamic educational institution that played an important roles in advancing the Islamic intellectual tradition in the classical Islamic era. Caliph al-Ma'mun succeeded in transforming *Bayt al-Hikmah* into an institution committed to employing scholars from all faiths to translate scientific texts into Arabic.² In the modern era, various Islamic countries manage or establish Islamic higher education institutions. Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, is one of the oldest Islamic universities in the world,³ attracting many students from diverse regions, including Indonesia, who seek to deepen their knowledge of religious sciences.⁴ Al-Azhar serves as a center for Sunni Islamic intellectual traditions in contemporary times.⁵ Conversely, the Islamic Republic of Iran has also established several Islamic universities that preserve the intellectual traditions of Shia Islam.⁶ Islamic higher education institutions around the world have made significant contributions to the preservation and development of religious sciences.

In the context of Indonesia, Islamic religious higher education institutions (PTKIN) have contributed to the development of religious sciences since the early days of independence. Islamic universities in Indonesia teach *'ulûm al-dîn* (conventional-

¹ Nunu Burhanuddin and Darul Ilmi, "Typologies of Religious Moderation in Indonesian Higher Education Institutions," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 16, no. 2 (2022): 455–79, doi:10.15642/JIIS.2022.16.2.455-479; Ainurrofiq Dawam, "Quo Vadis IAIN Sunan Kalijaga (Upaya Membangun Landasan Awal)," *Al-Jamiah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 41, no. 2 (2003); Zumrotul Mukaffa, "The Era of Uncertainty and Ethical Arrangement in Javanese Classical Texts: Disseminating Ranggawarsita's Works as Source of Islamic Ethics in Islamic Higher Education," *Al-Jami'ah* 56, no. 2 (2018): 461–93, doi:10.14421/ajis.2018.562.461-493; M. Amin Abdullah, "Kajian Ilmu Kalam Di IAIN Menyongsong Perguliran Paradigma Keilmuan Keislaman Pada Era Milenium Ketiga," *Al-Jami'ah* 64, no. 6 (2000): 78–101, <https://www.aljamiah.or.id/index.php/AJIS/article/view/3805/487>; Fuad Jabali, "Irsâ Al-Usus Al-'Ilmiyah Li Al-Dirâsat Al-Islâmîyah: Al-Tamawwur Al-Akâdîmî Li Al-Jâmi'at Al-Islâmîyah Al-Şukûmîyah Wa Al-Ma'âhid Al-Islâmîyah Al-Şukûmîyah Al-'Ulyâ Bi Indûnîsîyâ," *Studia Islamika* 9, no. 2 (1970), doi:10.15408/sdi.v9i2.668.

² Yedullah Kazmi, "The Rise and Fall of Culture of Learning in Early Islam," *Islamic Studies, Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad* 44, no. 1 (2005): 15–51, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20838948>.

³ World Affairs, "Al-Azhar" 123, no. 2 (2015): 44–46.

⁴ Mona Abaza, "Indonesian Azharites, Fifteen Years Later," *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 18, no. 1 (2003): 139–53, doi:10.1355/sj18-1e.

⁵ Dahlia el-Tayeb M. Gubara, "Al-Azhar and the Orders of Knowledge" (Columbia University, 2014), <https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8Z036C8>.

⁶ Shokrollah Hamdhaidari, Hossein Agahi, and Abdulhamid Papzan, "Higher Education during the Islamic Government of Iran (1979-2004)," *International Journal of Educational Development* 28, no. 3 (2008): 231–45, doi:10.1016/j.ijedudev.2006.11.001.

traditional Islamic knowledge), *fikr al-Islâmy* (Islamic thought), and *dirâsat al-islâmiyyah* (Islamic Studies).⁷ To date, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia manages 58 PTKIN, comprising 23 State Islamic Universities (UIN), 30 State Islamic Institutes (IAIN), and 5 State Islamic Colleges (STAIN).⁸ All PTKIN, on one hand, offer, teach, and develop religious sciences, while on the other hand, they serve as choices and learning environments for a segment of Generation Z in Indonesia. The total population of Generation Z in Indonesia is 71,509,082 individuals,⁹ with a portion continuing their education at PTKIN. The number of registrants at all PTKIN in Indonesia was 100,879 students in 2022, 97,115 students in 2023, and 93,819 students in 2024.¹⁰ Despite a decline in enrollment in 2024, PTKIN remains a popular choice for Generation Z in Indonesia.

In the contemporary era, PTKIN in Indonesia, particularly UIN, teaches and develops two types of knowledge within Islam. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas categorizes knowledge into two types: God-given knowledge, or religious sciences, and acquired knowledge, encompassing rational, intellectual, and philosophical sciences.¹¹ In recent years, several UINs in Indonesia have rejected the secularization of knowledge by promoting the discourse of knowledge integration. For instance, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta has introduced the discourse of integration-interconnection.¹² Each UIN appears to have its own concept regarding knowledge integration, which is implemented in the execution of the *Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi* (Three Pillars of Higher Education).

⁷ M. Amin Abdullah, "Islamic Studies in Higher Education in Indonesia: Challenges, Impact and Prospects for the World Community," *Al-Jami'ah* 55, no. 2 (2017): 391–426, doi:10.14421/ajis.2017.552.391-426.

⁸ A Mu'is and A M Huda, "Challenge of Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia (PTKIN) in Society 5.0," in *International Conference on Islamic Education (ICIED)* (Malang, 2022), 465–76, <http://repository.uin-malang.ac.id/15541/%0Ahttp://repository.uin-malang.ac.id/15541/6/15541.pdf>.

⁹ Badan Pusat Statistik Republik Indonesia, "Jumlah Penduduk Menurut Wilayah, Klasifikasi Generasi, Dan Jenis Kelamin, Indonesia, 2020," 2024, <https://sensus.bps.go.id/topik/tabular/sp2020/2/0/0>.

¹⁰ Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, "Buka SSE UM-PTKIN, Menag Kritisi Turunnya Peminat Dan Pendaftar Ke PTKIN," 2024, <https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/buka-sse-um-ptkin-menag-kritisi-turunnya-peminat-dan-pendaftar-ke-ptkin-4fvXo>.

¹¹ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1999); King Abdul Aziz University dan Quaid Azam University, *Second World Conference on Muslim Education: International Seminar on Islamic Concept and Curricula, Recommendations* (Islamabad: King Abdul Aziz University dan Quaid Azam University, 1980).

¹² Siswanto Siswanto, "Perspektif Amin Abdullah Tentang Integrasi-Interkoneksi Dalam Kajian Islam," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 3, no. 2 (2015): 376, doi:10.15642/teosofi.2013.3.2.376-409; A T Manalang, "Generation Z, Minority Millennials and Disaffiliation from Religious Communities: Not Belonging and the Cultural Cost of Unbelief.," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 17 (2021), <http://www.religjournal.com/pdf/ijrr17002.pdf>.

Various faculties and programs have been established, attracting the interest of Generation Z in Indonesia. However, PTKIN in Indonesia must compete, and so far, they have fallen behind in national and international university rankings compared to General Universities (PTU) managed by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. The majority of Generation Z prefers PTU over PTKIN.¹³

The study of religious sciences in PTKIN and Generation Z's interest in these fields is motivated by findings from several researchers indicating that this group is less religious or even non-religious. In the context of the United States, Ryan P. Burge revealed in 2023 that only 35% of Generation Z identifies as Protestant or Catholic, while 49% identify as atheist, agnostic, or having no particular religion. Statistically, Burge stated that half of Generation Z would identify as atheist, agnostic, or non-religious.¹⁴ On the other hand, Stavrianea and Kamenidou examined Generation Z's attitudes and behaviors toward churches and religion, presenting findings that indicate "subsequently, Gen Z'ers were asked if they go or not to church. Forty-six percent go rarely or never; 30.4% go sometimes; and 23.6% go frequently or very frequently."¹⁵ However, Manalang noted that while there is indeed a trend of increasing disbelief among Generation Z in the United States, a significant number of minority millennials and Generation Z still identify as spiritual. In the Indonesian context, Epafra et al. concluded that Generation Z is a tech-savvy and highly visual generation, expressing their religiosity through visual technology.¹⁶ They also perceive their parents as more religious than themselves.¹⁷

The above study claims that Generation Z is less religious or even non-religious. This claim leads to the conclusion that this young group lacks understanding and concern for religious sciences. Therefore, this article aims to examine the interest of Generation Z in Indonesia in religious studies. Specifically, it focuses on religious sciences at Islamic higher education institutions in Aceh and the interest of Generation Z in the faculties and programs offered by these institutions. This study argues that Generation Z still demonstrates interest in religious sciences, as evidenced by their choices of faculties and programs. This, in turn, indicates that Generation Z in Aceh Province maintains a religious attitude.

¹³ Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, "Ranking Dan Positioning PTKIN," accessed October 22, 2024, <https://kemenag.go.id/opini/ranking-dan-positioning-ptkin-5y1Es>.

¹⁴ Ryan P. Burge, "Gen Z and Religion in 2022," 2021, <https://religioninpublic.blog/2023/04/03/gen-z-and-religion-in-2022/>.

¹⁵ Aikaterini Stavrianea and Irene Kamenidou, "Generation Z and Religion in Times of Crisis," *Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics*, 2017, 205–11, doi:10.1007/978-3-319-56288-9_28.

¹⁶ Manalang, "Generation Z, Minority Millennials and Disaffiliation from Religious Communities: Not Belonging and the Cultural Cost of Unbelief."

¹⁷ Leonard Epafra et al., "Transitional Religiosity: The Religion of Generation Z," 2021, doi:10.4108/eai.2-11-2020.2305063.

Methodology

This research falls under the category of library research, aiming to explore and analyze literature relevant to the research topic. The library research relies on written sources as primary data to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject under investigation. This study employs two main approaches: historical and pedagogical. It is conducted at IAIN Lhokseumawe, located in the city of Lhokseumawe, Aceh. The primary instrument for data collection is document analysis, which includes official documents, both printed and digital, from the IAIN Lhokseumawe campus. Document analysis is chosen for its ability to provide detailed and authentic data regarding Generation Z's interest in religious studies. The data collected through document analysis are analyzed using content analysis techniques. This method enables the researcher to identify themes, patterns, and trends within the examined documents and to evaluate how the content reflects Generation Z's interest in religious sciences at IAIN Lhokseumawe. Content analysis is conducted systematically by categorizing relevant information and drawing conclusions based on the findings obtained.¹⁸

Results and Discussion

According to data from 2019, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) of the Republic of Indonesia manages 793 Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) and private Islamic higher education institutions, with a total student population of 987,553. Kemenag also recorded 48 *Ma'had Aly* with 1,572 students.¹⁹ In Aceh Province, there are five PTKIN: UIN ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, IAIN Lhokseumawe, IAIN Langsa, IAIN Takengon, and STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh. In 2024, UIN Ar-Raniry enrolled 4,211 new students, IAIN Langsa had 740 new students, IAIN Lhokseumawe had 835 new students, IAIN Takengon had 358 new students, and STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh enrolled 236 new students. This data indicates that PTKIN in Aceh continues to attract the interest of Generation Z, even though some students pursue their education at General Universities (PTU) both in Aceh and outside of Aceh. Additionally, some students also continue their studies at private Islamic higher education institutions (PTKIS) and *Ma'had Aly* in Aceh.

One of the Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) in Aceh that attracts the interest of Generation Z is IAIN Lhokseumawe, which has undergone several transformations since its establishment. Originally founded as the Academy of Religious Sciences (AIA) in 1969 by Drs. Tgk. H. A. Wahab Dahlawi, the regent of North Aceh, AIA was transformed into Malikussaleh Higher Education (PERTIM) in 1972, with AIA merging into the Faculty of Sharia. In 1975, the Faculty of Sharia became part of IAIN Ar-Raniry

¹⁸ Klaus H. Krippendorff, *Content Analysis* (California: Sage Publication, Inc., 1980).

¹⁹ Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, *Rencana Strategis Kementerian Agama Tahun 2020 - 2024* (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019).

Banda Aceh. The name of the institution continued to change, starting from the Malikussaleh College of Education under Drs. H. Ghazali Muhammad Syam, then the College of Sharia Science (STIS) under Drs. Idris Mahmudi, until finally it became the Malikussaleh College of Islamic Religion (STAIM) with the addition of the Tarbiyah department under Drs. H. A. Muthalib Hasan. In 2005, under the leadership of Drs. Hafifuddin, STAI Malikussaleh was nationalized into Malikussaleh State Islamic College (STAIN) through a Presidential Decree. After that, in 2016, the institution again changed its status to the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Lhokseumawe, with Dr. Hafifuddin continuing the leadership until 2021. Currently, IAIN Lhokseumawe opens four faculties and one postgraduate program, namely the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FTIK), Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business (FEBI), Faculty of Sharia (FASYA), and Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab and Da'wah (FUAD), as well as Postgraduate Program. In 2021, IAIN Lhokseumawe has a total of 6,191 students spread across 22 study programs.²⁰

The State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Lhokseumawe offers a variety of study programs covering various disciplines, both in the fields of education and Islamic law, as well as sharia social and economic sciences. In FTIK, IAIN Lhokseumawe provides Islamic Religious Education (PAI), Mathematics Education (TMA), English Education (TBI), Arabic Language Education (PBA), Primary School Teacher Education (PGMI), Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD), Islamic Education Management (MPI), and Indonesia Language Education (TBIn) programs. In FASYA, there are Islamic Family Law (Ahwal Al-Syakhshiyah), Constitutional Law/Politics (HTN), Islamic Astronomy (IF), and Islamic Economic Law (HES) programs. In FUAD, there are Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI), Islamic Guidance and Counseling (BKI), and Qur'anic Science and Tafsir (IAT) programs. In FEBI, there are Islamic Economics (ES), Islamic Banking (PBS), and Islamic Accounting (AKS) programs. All these study programs demonstrate IAIN Lhokseumawe's commitment to become an Islamic university that develops and preserves religious sciences.

From a curriculum perspective, every student at IAIN Lhokseumawe, regardless of their study program, is required to take several core courses. These include Islamic Study Methodology, Philosophy of Science, History of Islamic Civilization, Information Technology and Multimedia, Indonesian Language, Fiqh and Usul Fiqh, Basic Mathematics, Aqidah Akhlak, Arabic Language, English Language, Qur'anic Studies and Hadith, and Pancasila Education and Citizenship.²¹ These courses are offered to all students primarily to produce graduates of IAIN Lhokseumawe who are nationalists committed to their nation, state,

²⁰ Lembaga Penjaminan Mutu IAIN Lhokseumawe, *Buku Pedoman Pendidikan 2023 Institut Agama Islam Negeri Lhokseumawe* (Lhokseumawe: IAIN Lhokseumawe, 2023).

²¹ Lembaga Penjaminan Mutu IAIN Lhokseumawe, *Kurikulum Mata Kuliah Institusi IAIN Lhokseumawe* (Medan: IAIN Lhokseumawe, 2022).

and religion. The aim is to cultivate graduates who can (1) develop Islam-based sciences and (2) serve as researchers and drivers of community advancement. Additionally, students are provided with various other Islamic courses according to their chosen study programs.

Over the past four years (2020-2024), IAIN Lhokseumawe has continued to attract the interest of Generation Z. In 2020, IAIN Lhokseumawe had an admission quota of 3,961. Of this quota, there were 1,062 applicants, with 987 successfully registering. The following year, in 2021, the established quota decreased to 2,245; however, the number of applicants increased significantly to 2,323, although only 920 completed their re-registration. In 2022, the admission quota rose again to 3,110, with a sharp increase in applicants to 6,070, resulting in 1,150 re-registrants. In 2023, the quota was once more increased to 3,730, with 4,064 applicants; however, the number of re-registrants fell to 968. In conclusion, while IAIN Lhokseumawe has exhibited fluctuations in the number of applicants and registrations during the period from 2020 to 2023, there are challenges in converting applicants into registered students (re-registrants), particularly in 2023.

1. Interest of Generation Z in Faculties

In 2020, the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FTIK) offered the largest quota with a capacity of 1,747 students. However, several applicants were only 548, and of this group, only 509 continued with the re-registration process. Despite being the faculty with the highest quota, the number of students who completed re-registration was significantly lower than the capacity provided, indicating a gap between the quota and actual interest. Similarly, the Faculty of Sharia (FASYA), which had a quota of 705 students, faced a comparable situation. Only 114 applicants registered, with just 103 of them completing the re-registration. This demonstrates that interest in the Faculty of Sharia in 2020 did not match the offered quota, leaving more than half of the available spots unfilled. A slightly better situation was observed in the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab and Da'wah (FUAD) and the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business (FEBI). The Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab and Da'wah, with a quota of 735 students, recorded 173 applicants, of whom 163 completed the re-registration. The Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business, with a quota of 774, received 227 applicants and had 212 students complete their re-registration. While both faculties did not reach full capacity, they exhibited a more favorable ratio between applicants and the number of students who ultimately re-registration. This data indicates that despite the substantial admission quotas for 2020, the number of applicants and students who completed the re-registration process remained below the capacities set across all faculties. This could reflect challenges in attracting prospective students or other factors influencing their decisions to pursue studies at this institution.

Table 1. Data of New Students for the Year 2020

No.	Faculty	Year of Enrollment: 2020		
		Quota	Applicants	Re-Registrants
1	FTIK	1747	548	509
2	FASYA	705	114	103
3	FUAD	735	173	163
4	FEBI	774	227	212
	JUMLAH	3961	1062	987

Data Source: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Alumni of IAIN Lhokseumawe

In 2021, the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training allocated a quota of 980 students, with the number of applicants nearing this quota at 913 prospective students. However, only 433 students completed the re-registration process, indicating that less than half of the applicants proceeded to join this faculty. This reflects a decline in interest or other factors that caused most prospective students not to continue to the re-registration stage. Similarly, the Faculty of Sharia, which offered a quota of 512 students, recorded 451 applicants. Nevertheless, only 133 of these individuals completed re-registration, resulting in a significant gap between the initial number of applicants and the actual enrollment. With only about 26% of the total applicants completing the re-registration process, this faculty appears to face challenges in maintaining the interest of prospective students. A similar situation was observed in the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Da'wah, where the number of applicants (453) exceeded the quota of 363 students. However, only 156 students ultimately completed the re-registration process. Despite attracting more applicants than the available quota, this faculty also struggled to retain the interest of most of its applicants. The Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business faced a comparable scenario. With a quota of 390 students, this faculty received 506 applicants, the highest number among all faculties. Yet only 198 students completed the re-registration process, nearly half of the initial number of applicants. Overall, while some faculties succeeded in attracting more applicants than their quotas, the number of students who completed re-registration remains significantly lower than the initial applicants. This indicates challenges in sustaining the interest of prospective students following the initial admission process. This phenomenon may be attributed to various factors, such as competition with other institutions, shifts in student interests, or other constraints.

Table 2. Data of New Students for the Year 2021

No.	Faculty	Year of Enrollment: 2021		
		Quota	Applicants	Re-Registrants
1	FTIK	980	913	433
2	FASYA	512	451	133
3	FUAD	363	453	156
4	FEBI	390	506	198
	TOTAL	2245	2323	920

Data Source: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Alumni of IAIN Lhokseumawe

In 2022, for instance, the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training had a quota of 1,310 students but successfully attracted 2,589 applicants, indicating that the number of applicants more than doubled the available quota. However, only 525 of them proceeded to the re-registration stage, demonstrating that most prospective students ultimately decided not to continue the re-registration process. A similar situation was observed in the Faculty of Sharia. With a quota of 610 students, this faculty received 912 applicants, but only 144 individuals completed the re-registration process. This means that only about 15% of the initial applicants continued their studies in this faculty. This significant decline may reflect challenges in attracting prospective students to complete the registration process. The Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab and Da'wah also faced a considerable gap between the number of applicants and the students who re-registered. With a quota of 510 students and 935 applicants, this faculty was only able to retain 214 students who completed the re-registration process, which is still more than half of the available quota. The Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business had a quota of 680 students and attracted 1,634 applicants, which also more than doubled the capacity. However, only 267 students ultimately completed the re-registration process, indicating that most initial applicants decided not to proceed. Despite these faculties' ability to generate substantial interest among prospective students, the number of students who completed re-registration remains significantly lower than the number of applicants. This phenomenon may be attributed to various factors, including competition with other universities, changes in student interests, or administrative constraints that influence the final decisions of prospective students.

Table 3. Data of New Students for the Year 2022

No.	Faculty	Year of Enrollment: 2022		
		Quota	Applicants	Re-Registrants
1	FTIK	1310	2589	525
2	FASYA	610	912	144
3	FUAD	510	935	214
4	FEBI	680	1634	267
	Total	3110	6070	1150

Data Source: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Alumni of IAIN Lhokseumawe

In 2023, the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training offered the largest quota, accommodating 1,700 students, and successfully attracted 1,588 applicants. However, only 474 students proceeded to the re-registration stage, indicating that less than one-third of the applicants were interested in joining this faculty. This significant decline suggests the presence of factors that may influence students' decisions not to advance to the next stage. In the Faculty of Sharia, with a quota of 720 students, there were 539 applicants. However, only 117 students re-registered, reflecting the challenge of maintaining the interest of prospective students. The percentage of applicants who continued the process in this faculty appears low, indicating a possible dissatisfaction or change of choice among prospective students. The Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab and Dakwah recorded 676 applicants for a quota of 570 students, but of these, only 183 students re-registered. Although the faculty attracted more applicants than the available quota, the number of students who proceeded to the re-registration stage was still below expectations, suggesting the need for further evaluation of prospective students' experiences and expectations. The Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business also faced a similar situation. With a quota of 740 students, the faculty received 1,261 applicants, but only 194 students eventually re-registered. While the high number of applicants indicates a great deal of interest, the proportion of students who proceed to the re-registration stage indicates a problem that needs to be addressed to improve graduation rates and student satisfaction. Overall, while all faculties succeeded in attracting a significant number of applicants, the re-registration rates in each faculty highlight challenges that need to be addressed. This may reflect various factors, including competition from other institutions, shifts in student interests, or obstacles in the registration process that could affect prospective students' decisions to proceed to the next stage.

Table 4. Data of New Students for the Year 2023

No.	Faculty	Year of Enrollment: 2023		
		Quota	Applicants	Re-Registrants
1	FTIK	1700	1588	474
2	FASYA	720	539	117
3	FUAD	570	676	183
4	FEBI	740	1261	194
	JUMLAH	3730	4064	968

Data Source: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Alumni of IAIN Lhokseumawe

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that from 2020 to 2023, the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training exhibited a strong appeal to prospective students, consistently ranking at the top with the highest number of applicants each year. In 2020, this faculty attracted 548 applicants, with this number increasing to 913 in 2021. The peak occurred in 2022, with 2,589 applicants, although this figure declined to 1,588 in 2023. Meanwhile, the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business also demonstrated significant interest, particularly in 2022, with 1,634 applicants, following a lesser number of 227 applicants in 2020 and 506 applicants in 2021. However, in 2023, the number of applicants for this faculty slightly decreased to 1,261. On the other hand, the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab and Da’wah and the Faculty of Sharia were positioned lower in terms of applicants. In 2020, the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab and Da’wah received 173 applicants, which increased to 453 in 2021. However, in 2022, the number of applicants for this faculty was 935, before experiencing a decline to 676 in 2023. Conversely, the Faculty of Sharia faced greater challenges in attracting prospective students. The year 2020 recorded only 114 applicants, which rose to 451 in 2021 and 912 in 2022. Yet, in 2023, this faculty could only attract 539 applicants. Although all faculties managed to attract varying numbers of applicants, the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training remained the most sought after throughout this period, followed by the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business, the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab and Da’wah, and the Faculty of Sharia, which recorded the lowest number of applicants.

2. Interest of Generation Z in Study Programs

IAIN Lhokseumawe offers four undergraduate faculties: the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (*Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan* or FTIK), the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business (*Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis Islam* or FEBI), the Faculty of Sharia (*Fakultas Syariah* or FASYA), and the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab and Da’wah (*Fakultas Ushuluddin, Adab dan Dakwah* or FUAD).

a. *Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan (FTIK)*

The Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FTIK) at IAIN Lhokseumawe offers eight study programs focused on the development of Islamic education, namely: Islamic Religious Education (PAI), Mathematics Education (TMA), English Language Education (TBI), Arabic Language Education (PBA), Elementary School Teacher Education (PGMI), Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD), Islamic Education Management (MPI), and Indonesian Language Education (TBIn). Over the past four years, FTIK and its eight study programs have attracted the interest of Generation Z, as shown in the table below:

Table 5. New Student Data for FTIK by Study Program for the Years 2020-2023

Study Programs	Applicants for 2020	Applicants for 2021	Applicants for 2022	Applicants for 2023
Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI)	152	191	605	326
Tadris Matematika (TMA)	34	86	208	136
Tadris Bahasa Inggris (TBI)	60	125	256	240
Pendidikan Bahasa Arab (PBA)	67	99	168	203
Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (PGMI)	80	125	447	174
Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini (PIAUD)	37	103	207	139
Manajemen Pendidikan Islam (MPI)	68	103	381	209
Tadris Bahasa Indonesia (TBIn)	50	81	317	161

Data Source: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Alumni of IAIN Lhokseumawe

The data above shows that the study programs in FTIK show significant growth in the number of prospective students from year to year. The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program recorded the most notable spike, with enrolments increasing from 152 in 2020 to 605 in 2022, before decreasing to 326 in 2023. The Mathematics Education (TMA) program also showed a growth trend, from 34 applicants in 2020 to 208 in 2022, although it then declined to 136 in 2023. Meanwhile, the English Education (TBI) experienced a consistent increase, with 60 applicants in 2020, increasing to 256 in 2022, before slightly decreasing to 240 in 2023. The Arabic Language Education (PBA) shows steady growth, starting with 67 applicants in 2020 and reaching 203 applicants in 2023. The Primary School Teacher Education (PGMI) experienced a significant spike in 2022 with 447 applicants, after which it decreased again to 174 in 2023. Meanwhile, the Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD) and Islamic Education Management (MPI) experience similar fluctuations. PIAUD started with 37 registrants in 2020, increased to 207 in 2022, and decreased again to 139 in 2023. MPI also shows growth from 68 applicants in 2020 to 381 in 2022, before dropping to 209 in 2023. Finally, Tadris Bahasa Indonesia (TBIn) shows significant variation with 50 registrants in 2020, increasing to

317 in 2022, but decreasing to 161 in 2023. Overall, although some study programs experienced a significant increase in the number of applicants, the downward trend in 2023 indicates the challenges that need to be faced by institutions in attracting prospective students.

Based on the available registration data, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) study program occupies the top position in terms of the most applicants from 2020 to 2023. The number of applicants experienced a significant increase, starting with 152 applicants in 2020, increasing to 191 applicants in 2021, and reaching its peak with 605 applicants in 2022. Although there was a decrease to 326 applicants in 2023, PAI still maintained its position as the most popular study program compared to other study programs. The high interest in 2022 shows PAI's strong appeal among prospective students.

b. Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis Islam (FEBI)

The Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business (FEBI) opens three study programs at the undergraduate level, namely Islamic Economics (ES), Islamic Banking (PBS) and Islamic Accounting (AKS). Over the past four years, these programs have attracted the interest of Generation Z, as evidenced in the table below:

Table 6. New Student Data for FEBI by Study Program for the Years 2020-2023

Study Programs	Applicants for 2020	Applicants for 2021	Applicants for 2022	Applicants for 2023
Ekonomi Syariah (ES)	103	233	669	664
Perbankan Syariah (PBS)	73	151	555	348
Akuntansi Syariah (AKS)	51	122	410	249

Data Source: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Alumni of IAIN Lhokseumawe

Enrollment data for study programs in Sharia Economics shows an interesting trend over the period 2020 to 2023. The Islamic Economics (ES) study program experienced significant growth, with the number of applicants increasing from 103 in 2020 to 669 in 2022, which was the peak number of applicants. Although there was a slight decrease to 664 applicants in 2023, the program still showed high interest from prospective students. Meanwhile, the Islamic Banking (PBS) also showed a positive growth trend. Enrolment in this program increased from 73 in 2020 to 555 in 2022. However, in 2023, the number of applicants decreased significantly to 348. Nevertheless, the number of PBS applicants remains higher than in previous years. The Islamic Accounting Study Program (AKS) experienced a more moderate increase. Starting with 51 applicants in 2020, the program managed to attract 410 applicants in 2022. However, just like PBS, Sharia Accounting experienced a decline in the number of applicants in 2023, with a

total of 249 applicants. Overall, despite fluctuations in the number of applicants in 2023, the Sharia Economics study program remained the most popular among these three study programs, with the highest number of applicants in recent years. The significant increase in applicants in previous years shows that there is a strong interest in the Sharia Economics program.

Based on the available data, the program with the highest student interest from 2020 to 2023 is Islamic Economics (ES). The number of applicants saw a significant increase, starting from 103 in 2020, soaring to 233 in 2021, and peaking at 669 in 2022, before slightly decreasing to 664 in 2023. The peak figure in 2022 indicates that the Islamic Economics program garnered the most interest compared to other programs, such as Islamic Banking (PBS) and Islamic Accounting (AKS), which did not reach the same level of enrollment as ES during the same period.

c. Fakultas Ushuluddin, Adab dan Dakwah (FUAD)

The Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Da’wah (FUAD) at IAIN Lhokseumawe offers three undergraduate programs: Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI), Islamic Guidance and Counseling (BKI), and Qur’anic Sciences and Tafsir (IAT). These programs have also attracted the interest of Generation Z, as illustrated below:

Table 7. New Student Data for FUAD by Study Program for the Years 2020-2023

Study Programs	Applicants for 2020	Applicants for 2021	Applicants for 2022	Applicants for 2023
Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam (KPI)	50	167	265	201
Bimbingan dan Konseling Islam (BKI)	87	220	522	403
Ilmu Al-Qur`an dan Tafsir (IAT)	36	66	148	72

Data Source: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Alumni of IAIN Lhokseumawe

Between the years 2020 and 2023, the enrollment numbers for the three programs at the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Da’wah (FUAD) exhibited fluctuations. The Islamic Communication and Broadcasting (KPI) program demonstrated a significant upward trend from 2020 to 2022. In 2020, there were 50 applicants, and this number surged to 167 in 2021. This positive trend continued in 2022, with the number of applicants reaching 265. However, in 2023, a decline was observed, with the number of applicants dropping to 201.

Conversely, the Islamic Guidance and Counseling (BKI) program experienced an extraordinary surge in the number of applicants year over year. In 2020, this program recorded 87 registrants. By 2021, this figure more than doubled to 220 applicants, peaking in 2022 with 522 applicants. Nevertheless, a slight decrease occurred in 2023, with the number of applicants falling to 403, which still represents a significantly high figure

compared to previous years. Finally, the Qur’anic Sciences and Tafsir (IAT) program also experienced substantial growth from 2020 to 2022. In 2020, there were only 36 applicants, but this number nearly doubled to 66 in 2021. The largest increase occurred in 2022, with 148 applicants. However, in 2023, the number of applicants drastically decreased again to 72.

This data indicates fluctuations in enrollment numbers year by year, with some programs experiencing significant increases while others faced declines in the final year. The Islamic Guidance and Counseling (BKI) program had the highest number of applicants among the three programs, particularly in 2022 with 522 applicants. Despite the decrease in 2023, this program still leads with 403 applicants, making it the program with the greatest interest among prospective students during the 2020-2023 period.

d. Fakultas Syariah (FASYA)

The Faculty of Sharia (FASYA) at IAIN Lhokseumawe offers four undergraduate programs: Islamic Family Law (HKI), Constitutional Law/Politics (HTN), Islamic Astronomy (IF), and Islamic Economic Law (HES). Over the past four years, FASYA has also attracted the interest of Generation Z, as shown in the table below:

Table 8. New Student Data for FUAD by Study Program for the Years 2020-2023

Study Programs	Applicants for 2020	Applicants for 2021	Applicants for 2022	Applicants for 2023
Hukum Keluarga Islam (Ahwal Al-Syakshiyah)	24	83	189	157
Hukum Tatanegara/ Siyasah (HTN)	35	124	309	172
Ilmu Falaq/Astronomi Islam (IF)	22	67	58	71
Hukum Ekonomi Syari`ah (HES)	33	177	356	139

Data Source: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Alumni of IAIN Lhokseumawe

From 2020 to 2023, the enrollment figures for the four programs at the Faculty of Sharia (FASYA) exhibited diverse trends. The Islamic Family Law (Ahwal Al-Syakshiyah) program saw a significant increase in applicants from 2020 to 2022. In 2020, the program received only 24 applicants, but this number surged to 83 in 2021 and more than doubled to 189 in 2022. However, there was a slight decrease in 2023, with applicants falling to 157. Similarly, the Constitutional Law/Politics (HTN) program demonstrated a comparable trend. In 2020, it recorded 35 applicants, which then dramatically increased to 124 in 2021, peaking at 309 applicants in 2022. Nonetheless, in 2023, there was a significant decline, with only 172 applicants. In contrast, the Islamic Astronomy (IF) program displayed a more stable trend, albeit with lower enrollment figures. In 2020, it attracted only 22 applicants, increasing to 67 in 2021. However, there was a decrease in 2022,

with only 58 applicants, followed by a slight increase to 71 applicants in 2023. Lastly, the Islamic Economic Law (HES) program experienced remarkable enrollment growth in 2021 and 2022. In 2020, it recorded 33 applicants, which surged more than fivefold to 177 in 2021, continuing to rise to 356 applicants in 2022. However, 2023 saw a sharp decline, with only 139 applicants. Despite some programs experiencing decreased enrollment in 2023, the data indicate that the Constitutional Law and Islamic Economic Law programs attracted the highest interest during this period, particularly in 2022, with substantial numbers of applicants.

Data for 2024 reveal that the total number of enrolled students across various programs at IAIN Lhokseumawe is 840. These students are distributed across 18 different programs. The Islamic Religious Education program has the highest enrollment, with 108 students, followed by the Primary School Teacher Education program, which has 93 students. The Islamic Economics program also shows significant numbers, with 73 students, while the Islamic Guidance and Counseling program accommodates 79 students. Other programs, such as English Language Education and Arabic Language Education, also have considerable enrollments, with 45 and 35 students, respectively. Meanwhile, the Islamic Economic Law and Mathematics Education programs each have 30 students. On the lower end, programs such as Islamic Astronomy have 13 students and Qur'anic Sciences and Tafsir have 19 students. The Islamic Family Law and Early Childhood Islamic Education programs each have 25 students. This distribution indicates that the education and Islamic economics programs garner more attention compared to other programs, reflecting the interest and demand in these fields within society.

Based on the presented data, an analysis of student interest in various academic programs can be conducted as follows: (1) Most Popular Programs: (a) Islamic Religious Education (PAI): With 108 students, this program indicates a strong interest among students in exploring educational aspects within the religious context. This interest may stem from the high demand for religious educators in schools and Islamic educational institutions. (b) Primary School Teacher Education (PGMI): The enrollment of 93 students reflects significant interest in preparing educators for elementary education in madrasahs, highlighting the necessity for robust early-stage education. (2) Programs in the Fields of Economics and Law: (a) Islamic Economics (ES) and Islamic Economic Law (HES): These programs attract 73 and 30 students, respectively. This interest suggests that students are keen on exploring aspects of Sharia-based economics, aligning with the growth of the Islamic economy sector in Indonesia. (b) Constitutional Law (HTN) and Islamic Banking (PBS): These programs also demonstrate good enrollment figures, with 29 and 37 students, reflecting students' desire to understand and engage with legal and financial systems in accordance with Sharia principles. (3) Educational Programs: Several educational programs, such as English Language Education (TBI), Indonesian Language Education (TBI_n), and Islamic Education Management (MPI), also show favorable enrollment figures of 30, 49, and 46 students, respectively. This trend indicates

that many students are eager to develop teaching skills in language and education management. (4) Programs with Low Interest: Programs such as Islamic Astronomy/IF (13 students) and Qur'anic Sciences and Tafsir/IAT (19 students) exhibit lower enrollment numbers, which may be attributed to narrower specializations or a lack of understanding regarding career prospects in these fields. (5) Balance Between Theory and Practice: Programs related to guidance and counseling, such as Islamic Education Guidance and Counseling/BKPI (30 students) and Islamic Guidance and Counseling/BKI (79 students), demonstrate that students are also interested in mental and social welfare aspects within education. The data indicates a strong interest in the fields of education, Islamic economics, and law, while some more specialized programs attract less attention. This reflects the community's needs and interests in quality education and systems that support Sharia principles.

Based on a survey of 186 new students at IAIN Lhokseumawe, various reasons underlie their choices to enroll at this institution and select specific academic programs. The majority of students, at 47.8%, expressed a desire to deepen their knowledge of religious studies as their primary motivation. This suggests that IAIN Lhokseumawe successfully attracts students who are interested in improving their understanding of religious teachings. Meanwhile, 17.7% of students reported that they were not accepted at other universities, reflecting the competitive nature of higher education. In addition, 11.8% of students stated that they applied to fulfill their parents' wishes, highlighting the influence of family in educational decisions. Location was also a significant factor, with 10.2% of students choosing IAIN Lhokseumawe due to the campus' proximity to their homes. This illustrates the importance of convenience and accessibility in students' decision-making process regarding their educational environment. On the other hand, 8.1% of students cited the affordability of the Single Tuition Fee (UKT) as the main reason for their choice, indicating that cost-effectiveness was also an important factor in their decision. These diverse reasons provide insight into the diverse profiles and backgrounds of new students.

In addition to the reasons for choosing IAIN Lhokseumawe, the survey also explored the factors that motivated students to choose their current academic program. A total of 58.6% of students expressed a strong interest in the field of study offered by their study program, indicating that interest and enthusiasm for the field of study are key drivers in academic decision-making. Meanwhile, 18.3% of students believe that their chosen program will facilitate future employment opportunities, reflecting an awareness of the career prospects associated with their education. In addition, 5.9% of students admitted to choosing their study program because they were not accepted in other study programs, while 7% followed their parents' wishes in making their choice. In addition, 4.8% of students chose their program based on accreditation, highlighting the importance of educational quality in their decision. Other students provided a variety of additional reasons, reflecting the complexity of factors influencing educational decisions among

new students at IAIN Lhokseumawe. As such, the results of this survey not only reflect individual motivations but also illustrate the broader social dynamics at play in the higher education process.

Conclusion

Based on previous studies, two conclusions can be drawn. First, in the context of Generation Z's interest in faculties, the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FTIK) consistently attracts the highest number of applicants, despite experiencing a significant decline in re-registrations. In 2020, out of a quota of 1,747 students, only 548 applied, and 509 re-registered. Although the quota decreased in subsequent years, the number of applicants remained high, reaching 2,589 in 2022 before dropping to 1,588 in 2023. Other faculties, such as the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business (FEBI), saw a surge in interest in 2022 with 1,634 applicants, but also experienced a decline in 2023. In contrast, the Faculty of Sharia and the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab and Da'wah faced challenges in attracting and retaining student interest, with applicant numbers significantly below the available capacity. Overall, while FTIK remains the most sought-after faculty, the challenge of retaining applicants who complete re-registration continues to be an issue for all faculties.

Second, regarding Generation Z's interest in study programs at IAIN Lhokseumawe over the past four years, the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FTIK) has emerged as a popular choice, with the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) program being the most favored, despite some programs experiencing a decline in applicants in 2023. The Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business (FEBI) also demonstrated a positive trend, particularly in the Islamic Economics program. The Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab and Da'wah (FUAD) experienced fluctuations in applicant numbers, while the Faculty of Sharia (FASYA) attracted considerable interest, especially in Constitutional Law and Islamic Economic Law. A survey of new students revealed that the desire to explore religion, career prospects, and family influence are the main factors in choosing a study program.

The novelty of this study lies in analyzing Generation Z's interest in the choice of faculties and study programs specifically at IAIN Lhokseumawe, focusing on enrollment trends and factors that influence interest, such as the desire to explore religion, career prospects, and family influence. This study provides valuable insights into inter-faculty differences in interest levels and enrollment fluctuations over a four-year period, which have not been explored much before, especially in an Islamic faith-based higher education environment. In addition, this study also offers a new perspective on the challenges of maintaining student re-enrollment, which can serve as a reference for efforts to improve recruitment strategies and manage student interest in similar institutions.

The limitations of this study lie in the scope of the data which only includes registrants over the past four years and is limited to one institution, IAIN Lhokseumawe, so it may

not represent the overall pattern of Generation Z's interests nationwide. In addition, external factors, such as economic and social conditions that may influence faculty choice, have not been analyzed in depth. Suggestions for future research are to conduct inter-institutional comparative studies in different regions to identify broader patterns of interest and to add an analysis of external factors in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the younger generation's preferences for fields of study.

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