

Problem Analysis of the Low Number of New Student Admissions at Islamic Religious Universities in the Papua Region (Case Study at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua)

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Abstract: The results of new student admissions that do not meet targets have become a problem faced by the Fattahul Muluk Papua State Islamic Institute (IAIN) in recent years. The small number of students has an impact on the level of performance of lecturers, the amount of non-tax state revenue (PNBP), and campus accreditation. It can threaten the existence of the educational institution. The aim of writing this article is to analyze the causes of the problem of the low number of new student admissions at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. The research method used is qualitative research with a case study approach. The analysis technique was carried out descriptively on data obtained through interviews, observations, and relevant documents during this research. The results of this research indicate that the low number of new student admissions at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua is due to: 1. The Jayapura region is not a barometer of education; 2. The coverage area of IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua is far from areas of Muslim communities; 3. The majority of Muslims in the Papua region are Abangan Muslims or not from the Santri group; 4. The campus location is not strategic. 5. Lack of public transportation facilities; 6. The security of the campus environment is not guaranteed; 7. Inadequate campus facilities; 8. The study programs offered at IAIN Fattahul Muluk are mostly based on Islamic religion; and 9. Competitors offering religious-based and general study programs)

Keyword: Problems, New Student Admissions, PTKIN, Papua.

1. Introduction

The number of universities in Indonesia has led to intense competition in attracting public interest in choosing and enrolling in the existing universities. Higher education administrators must strive as much as possible to prepare their potential and advantages as an attraction for prospective students. Higher education institutions that are not prepared for this competition will be affected by fewer students enrolling on those campuses (Damayanti et al., 2020). The success of recruiting new students at an educational institution depends on the institution's management's ability to create a quality educational environment, which is supported by effective promotion to the wider community (Ansor & Subali, 2021). With the provision of quality education accompanied

by the presentation of complete and open information to the public, it has become a widely used strategy to boost the interest of prospective new students.

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Tight competition in recruiting new students is also felt in various religious universities in Indonesia. The Minister of Religious Affairs, Yaqut Cholil Qoumas, urged religious campuses to continue striving to improve quality and innovation. He is worried that religious campuses will have fewer students in the future. He conveyed that serious improvement efforts should be made because the challenges ahead are becoming increasingly complex and significant. [3]. The issue of declining interest at the level of religious higher education institutions is currently being felt at one of the PTKIN (State Islamic Religious Colleges) in Papua, namely IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua.

From the data on new student admissions obtained from the Academic Services Subsection of IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua, there has been a decrease in the number of new students for four consecutive years.

Table 1. PMB Data IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua

| No | Year of PMB | Number of New Students |
|----|-------------|------------------------|
| 1. | 2021 | 293 |
| 2. | 2022 | 248 |
| 3. | 2023 | 245 |
| 4. | 2024 | 201 |

(Source: PMB evaluation document, 2024)

The recap of the number of new students from 2021 to 2024 listed in Table 1 above shows a decline in the admission of new students at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. The number of new students admitted is much lower compared to the available quota for new student admissions (See Table 2).

Table 2. PMB Quota Based on Registration at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua

| No | PMB Pathway | Quota Portion |
|----|---------------|---------------|
| 1. | SPAN PTKIN | 512 |
| 2. | UM-PTKIN | 512 |
| 3. | Lokal/Mandiri | 256 |

(Source: PMB evaluation document, 2024)

The small number of students will impact various aspects, including the level of fulfillment of the lecturer's performance load that does not meet the minimum standards. The lecturer's performance load that does not meet the standards will affect the achievement of the lecturer's career ladder and will also impact the accreditation value of the campus and study programs. The small number of students at universities also affects the low non-tax state revenue (PNBP) at these institutions. Non-tax state revenue (PNBP) plays an important role with a significant contribution [4]. Non-tax state revenue at universities is outlined in the Decree of the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia No. 115/KMK.06/2001, which explains that non-tax state revenue (PNBP) at universities comes from educational development contributions, entrance exam selection fees, and contract work results by the roles and functions of universities. In addition to these sources, PNBP can also come from the sale of products from higher education activities, individual donations or grants, government and non-government institutions, as well as community contributions [5]. If one of the sources of funding for higher education is less than optimal, it can become an obstacle in the implementation of various programs that need to be carried out. If the issue of the low number of students is allowed to persist, it is feared that it will threaten the existence of the campus. The purpose of this article is to analyze various causes of the low number of new student admissions at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua.

2. Method

Research methods are rational, empirical, and systematic scientific approaches to obtaining data with specific purposes and uses. [6]. The research method used in the preparation of this study is a qualitative research method with a case study approach. The data obtained related to the phenomenon or cases concerning the problem of low new student enrollment at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua will be analyzed descriptively. Data collection techniques were obtained through interviews, observations, and the examination of relevant documents during the course of this research.

The data collection technique involves observation to determine the environmental conditions or areas related to the low new student admissions at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. Additionally, observation is carried out to observe various activities and objects or actors involved in various activities related to the new student admission program at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. The interview technique was conducted to gather various information through key informants related to the study theme about the low number of new student admissions at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. The informants for this research are the Head of the New Student Admissions Unit, the Head of the Academic Services Subdivision, and one of the Public Relations Officers at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. These informants were chosen because they are the ones who technically carry out their duties and responsibilities in the new student recruitment activities at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. Document tracking is conducted by searching for information in the form of writings, event records, policies, images, or works related to the study of the problem of low new student admissions at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. The data collection technique through documentation in this research is document tracing of PMB

evaluations, PMP brochures, pamphlets, as well as social media and the campus website as media for conveying information closely related to the new student admission program.

3. Results

The new student admission program (PMB) is a routine program held at universities every year, including at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua is currently the only state Islamic religious university (PTKIN) in the Province of Papua. Its presence in the Papua region serves as one of the means to educate the community through education and as a medium for spreading Islamic teachings in the eastern part of Indonesia. To maintain its existence, many efforts and strategies have been implemented to ensure that this campus remains relevant and attractive to the public as a choice for continuing education at the higher education level.

To support the success of the new student recruitment program, the PMB unit along with the academic services unit, public relations, and TIPD IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua collaborate in organizing various efforts for the new student admission process, starting from socialization, promotion, registration, to the selection of entrance exams according to the established procedures.

The PMB program at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua has three pathways to choose from, namely the SPAN-PTKIN pathway, the UM-PTKIN pathway, and the local or independent pathway. The SPAN-PTKIN pathway is a registration route based on academic achievements, with selection through report card grades at the SMA/MA/SMK level and equivalent. Meanwhile, the UM-PTKIN pathway is the student admission route through tests or entrance exams. The SPAN-PTKIN and UM-PTKIN pathways are conducted simultaneously on a national scale. The local or independent pathway is the student admission route through tests, either interviews or written exams, with procedures adjusted to each respective university.

To successfully implement the PMB program, various socialization and promotion activities were carried out through both print and electronic media, such as banner installations, billboards, hoardings, sharing information on social media like IG, FB, websites, placing ads on RRI, and local newspapers. Efforts to optimize PMB are also carried out through socialization in schools, socialization in mosques, audiences at the Ministry of Religious Affairs office, as well as government agencies, sharing information through alumni, organizing various competitions inviting high school/vocational school students and the equivalent, and participating in various educational exhibitions in schools.

Although various efforts have been made to optimize the PMB results at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua, several factors contribute to the low number of new student admissions at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. The results of this study indicate that the low number of new student admissions at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua is caused by:

- 1) The Jayapura region is not an education barometer;
The Papua region, especially in Jayapura, is not a benchmark for education like the Java region or cities in Indonesia with advanced education quality. People in

Papua, especially the transmigrant communities like in the Arso area, who have money, would prefer places like Java for college.

- 2) The coverage area of IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua is far from Muslim communities;

The location of IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua, which is in the city of Jayapura, is not close to Muslim enclaves. Meanwhile, IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua is a campus that offers various study programs with Islamic religious characteristics. The areas near Jayapura such as Wamena, Biak, and Merauke mostly have indigenous populations who are non-Muslim. Unlike the IAIN Sorong campus, for example, whose area is close to regions where some of the indigenous population have embraced Islam for a long time, such as the Fak-Fak, Kaimana, Raja Ampat, and Seram regions.

- 3) The majority of Muslims in the Papua region are Abangan Muslims or not from the Santri group;

some of the Muslims in the Papua region, especially in Jayapura, are migrants from the majority of Abangan Muslims. (bukan dari golongan santri). In predominantly Muslim areas, such as Java, it is common for people from the Santri community to enter programs on a religious basis. However, in Papua, where the majority of the population is non-Muslim, the interest in enrolling in programs with a religious basis is considered quite low.

- 4) The campus location is not strategic;



Figure 1. Location of IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua Campus

The IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua campus is located on a hill near several schools such as IPDN, SMA Olahraga, and SMA 3 Jayapura. The atmosphere and environment of this campus are quite calm and far from the hustle and bustle, making it conducive for the lecture process. However, the residential areas surrounding it are villages of OAP (Indigenous Papuans) who are mostly non-Muslims. In the area near the campus, it is also difficult to find public facilities such as markets, shops, rental services, photocopy services, and boarding houses or residences, which are basic needs for students, especially for those from

outside the region. If viewed geographically, the location of the IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua campus can be said to be less strategic.

- 5) Lack of public transportation facilities;
There is currently no public transportation mode to reach the IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua campus. However, the campus provides a campus bus service with only two buses in its fleet, and the operational schedule is limited to twice a day, in the morning (pickup) and afternoon (drop-off) at limited drop-off points. However, this is still very lacking and poses a significant obstacle for some students who do not have private vehicles to easily reach the campus location.
- 6) The campus environment security is not guaranteed;
This campus is not equipped with a security post, there is no fence surrounding the campus, and the number of security personnel is still insufficient. This condition creates a sense of insecurity when on campus. The campus location, which is far from the hustle and bustle, and the lack of adequate security systems, make the security of IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua campus less guaranteed.
- 7) Inadequate campus facilities;
Complete facilities and infrastructure are a unique attraction for the community in choosing a campus because inadequate facilities will hinder the fulfillment of various needs. Several facilities are still inadequate at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua, such as the lack of a cafeteria, sports facilities, and sufficient transportation facilities. In addition, many campus facilities are poorly maintained or damaged, such as air conditioners, projectors, and lighting. This certainly causes discomfort in carrying out various academic activities.
- 8) The study programs offered at IAIN Fattahul Muluk are mostly based on Islamic religion;
Most of the study programs offered at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua are programs with an Islamic foundation. On the other hand, most of the population in Papua is non-Muslim. The Muslim community mostly consists of migrants. If we look at the trends in society and the socio-religious conditions in the Papua region, some members of the community tend to be more interested in choosing general majors or study programs compared to those with a religious basis. This condition poses a significant challenge for IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua to attract a large number of students.
- 9) Competitors offering religious and general-based study programs.
More and more competing campuses with a foundation based on religion are offering general majors or study programs. For example, Yapis Jayapura University and Muhammadiyah University of Papua offer many general study programs despite being under the auspices of Islamic foundations.

4. Discussion

From the research findings obtained, several factors contribute to the low number of new student admissions at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. The first factor is the social

conditions and stereotypes that have developed in society, which view the Papua region as not being a barometer of education. In Indonesia, the education barometer is still centered in the Java region. Although various government programs have attempted to equalize education across all regions of Indonesia, the brand image of student cities is still concentrated in the major cities of Java Island, such as Yogyakarta, Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya [7]. If we look at the social and cultural conditions as well as the availability of educational facilities, it is reasonable that the major campuses in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya are used as benchmarks for education in Indonesia. The ease of access to information, availability of transportation, relatively affordable cost of living, and support from local government contribute to branding these cities as student cities. If compared to the Papua region, there are many factors that pose challenges to making this area a barometer for education.

The next fact that contributes to the low number of students at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua is that the reach of IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua is far from areas with Muslim communities, and the majority of Muslims in Papua are Abangan Muslims or not from the Santri group. The Muslim community in Papua is the target audience of IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. Although the target specifications of this campus are not too large, if the marketing strategy can be executed properly, it is hoped that many people (target market) will be interested in making IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua their choice for higher education. Essentially, the marketing strategy stage includes segmenting, targeting, and positioning. Segmentation is necessary to understand consumer needs and desires. Targeting is the selection process to determine the target market that will be the focus. Meanwhile, positioning is the steps taken to position the offered product so that it is truly needed and desired by consumers [8]. This is also supported by research conducted by Maiza Fikri, which explains that the decline in new students can be influenced by many factors, including promotional methods, selling points, and the facilities offered [9]. If this marketing strategy can be implemented correctly, it is possible that the number of new students at IAIN Fattahul Muluk could increase and its existence could become even stronger.

The campus's non-strategic location, inadequate public transportation facilities, insufficient campus security, and inadequate campus facilities are problems related to the marketing mix. The marketing mix consists of various elements that must be combined or blended for optimization in marketing. The marketing mix includes Product, Price, Promotion, and Place [10]. The elements of the marketing mix are often referred to as the 4Ps. By combining the quality of the offered product with an appropriate price, supported by attractive promotions and a strategic location, these strengths can be used to increase sales. The issues related to the marketing mix, which primarily involve the non-strategic location, lack of transportation, and inadequate security, must be addressed immediately. University administrators can collaborate with local government, such as the transportation department, to open access to public transportation routes that pass in front of the campus. This is expected to boost public interest by providing easier access and public transportation to the campus. Regarding the issue of inadequate security, campus administrators can allocate funds and propose a program to develop a better

campus security system and increase human resources to add more campus security personnel. These efforts must be planned for medium- and long-term targets so that in the future, the growth of interest can be optimized to support the institution's existence.

Various alternative efforts in response to the problem of the low number of new student enrollments aim to increase public interest in educational services at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. Consumer purchasing behavior or actions to determine the selection of a product or service are influenced by many factors, including consumer interest, product quality, and the price offered [11]. Regarding the problem of the emergence of several competitors offering religious and general study programs, while the study programs offered at IAIN Fattahul Muluk are mostly Islam-based, which is less favored by the target market, the solution is to build the institution's image (branding image). Building an image not only provides quality education but also strengthens the unique values upheld in the eyes of the community. [12]. Building a strong brand amidst fierce competition is sometimes not easy. However, strengthening the created brand will provide a distinguishing factor for an institution compared to its competitors. In addition, positioning by opening new study programs that align with market needs should also be done, for example, by adding options for general study programs while still strengthening the brand image of the existing study programs.

5. Conclusion

The admission of new students at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua is conducted annually through three pathways: SPAN-PTKIN, UM-PTKIN, and local or independent pathways. The new student admission program at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua is organized by empowering various elements, from the PMB unit, the Academic Services Subsection, and the TIPD, to the public relations team. However, several factors contribute to the low number of new student admissions at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua. These causes are: 1. The Jayapura region is not an educational barometer; 2. The area covered by IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua is far from Muslim communities; 3. The majority of Muslims in the Papua region are nominal Muslims or not from the Santri group; 4. The campus location is not strategic; 5. Insufficient public transportation facilities; 6. Campus environment security is not guaranteed; 7. Inadequate campus facilities; 8. The study programs offered at IAIN Fattahul Muluk are mostly based on Islamic religion; and 9. Competitors that offer both religious and general study programs. Various underlying factors are problems that must be promptly addressed with appropriate solutions so that the issue of the low number of new student admissions at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua can be resolved quickly, thereby ensuring the campus's existence is maintained. The recommendation for future research is a study on strategies to maintain the existence of the IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua campus.

Acknowledgements

The author expresses gratitude to the rector of IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua and his staff for the permission and opportunity given, allowing this research to proceed smoothly. The author also expresses gratitude and appreciation to the head of the new

student admissions unit, the head of the general services sub-section, and the head of the public relations unit of IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua for the data and information that greatly assisted in the preparation of this article. The researcher hopes that the data and information presented in this article can serve as a reference for improvement so that IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua can become better in the future..

Funding

The research titled "Analysis of the Problems of Low New Student Admissions at Islamic Religious Colleges in the Papua Region (Case Study at IAIN Fattahul Muluk Papua)" is self-funded by the researcher.

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