Research Trend in Higher Islamic Studies: A Case Study at the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya (1993-2011)

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Abstract: Postgraduate research in Islamic Studies signifies a remarkable trend of PhD graduates and fields of specialization in research universities. This phenomenon indicates a demand and significant factor of Islamic Studies among postgraduate students as well as its fields of specialization. Thus, this article aims to examine the trend of PhD graduates and fields of specialization in Islamic Studies at the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya (UM), one of the top research universities in Malaysia, as a case study from 1993-2011. For this reason, the study applied a qualitative method and a Bibliometric approach to deal with the research data. Accordingly, the study found that after 30 years of the establishment of Academy of Islamic Studies, UM, there are 243 PhD graduates of which 215 (88.5%) are male and only 28 (11.5%) are female. In terms of nationality, there are 127 graduates (52%) from Malaysia and 116 graduates (48%) are foreigners. There are 9 departments in the Academy of Islamic Studies, which indicates the fields of specialization in Islamic Studies in the Academy of Islamic Studies, UM. Until 2011, the most popular field of specialization in Islamic Studies was the field of Aqidah and Islamic Thought, which produced 53 PhD graduates, followed by the field of al-Qur'an and al-Hadith, with 52 PhD graduates and then the field of Fiqh and Usul, which produced 50 PhD graduates. There are four fields of specialization of Islamic Studies that are also considered popular and which produced a number of PhD graduates, i.e., the field of Islamic History and Civilization (22 PhD graduates), the field of Da'wah and Human Development (20 PhD graduates), Syariah and Economics (16 PhD graduates) and Syariah and Law (14 graduates).

Key words: Fields of Specialization · Postgraduate research · Academy of Islamic Studies

INTRODUCTION

Postgraduate research of doctoral degree (PhD) programs has become a significant academic program for universities all over the world [1] and particularly in Muslim countries [2]. In the case of Malaysian universities, the Postgraduate PhD program signifies themain feature of a research university-a prestigiousstatus forMalaysian Public Universities, which are evaluated and awarded by the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia [3]. University Malaya (UM), as one of the top research universities in Malaysia, takes the management of the Postgraduate programs seriously, particularly forthe PhD programsthat are offered by the

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faculties, academies and centers. Since 2006, every faculty, academy and center at UM has been set with quality management and key performance indicators (KPI) for thePostgraduate program, especially for PhD programs (UM 2011). Focusing on PhD programs not only incorporates the number of ongoing PhD candidates, but also the number of PhD graduates that are managed and produced by the faculty or the academy within the minimum period of candidature (KPT 2010). This phenomenon indicates a significant trend forPhD graduates, as well as the field of specialization of PhD programs offered by the faculty or the academy at UM. As a subject matter, this study specifically aims to examine how this phenomenon reflects the trend of PhD graduates in Islamic Studies, particularly at the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya (AISUM) from its establishment in 1981 until today. Furthermore, the study will also examine the trend of the field of specialization for PhD graduates at AISUM in the30 years sinceits establishment [4].

Significantly, the study will reveal the contribution of AISUM in producing a number of PhD graduates in Islamic Studies as well as their field of specialization. In the context of research universities in Malaysia, a significant number of PhD graduates will indicate the performance of the Postgraduate research of the university and the faculty or the Academy as well. As Malaysia aims to have 60,000 PhD holdersby 2023 under the 'MyBrain15' project for the sake of the requirements of a developed country [5], the increasing number of PhD graduates at the faculty or academy level of a university signifies the contribution to thenational interest. The questions arising are:HasAISUM achieved a significant number of PhD graduates in Islamic Studies in the30 years since its establishment? What is the most significant field of specialization in Islamic Studies of PhD graduate at AISUM that signifies its benchmark of expertise in Islamic Studies? The answersto thesequestions will be revealed after the discussion of twosubtopics, i.e., 'Research Methodology' and 'Postgraduate Research at AISUM'

Research Methodology: The study applied the qualitative method in dealing with the data PhD for graduates of AISUM, which was officially published yearly by the University in the book of graduation. The data were further analyzed in order to determine the field of specialization of PhD graduates and their departments at AISUM. The study analyzed AISUM PhD graduate data from 1993 until 2010 as well as the departments to determine their field of specialization in Islamic Studies.

Although the departments of AISUM wereonly established in 1996 there were anumber of PhD graduates in 1993, 1994 and 1995. In order to categorize the field of specialization for those PhD graduates, the study determined the expertise and the department of their supervisor as their field of specialization in Islamic Studies.

In presenting the data to be analyzed, the study applied the bibliometric approach [6], Bakri and Willet (2008) [7] to reveal the trend of PhD graduates in Islamic Studies at AISUM from 1993 until 2010. Through the bibliometric approach, which is similar to that used by Raihanah and Asmak (2009) [8], the data reveal the departments of AISUM that were most prolific in producing graduate PhD holders on a yearly basis from 1993 until 2010. This data also indicate the most popular fields of specialization that have been chosen by the PhD graduates at AISUM. The study also revealed the trend of gender and nationality of AISUM PhD graduates in order to indicate the universality and internationalization of AISUM as the center of postgraduate research in Islamic Studies [9].

30 Years of Postgraduate Research at Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya: The official establishment of the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya took place in 1981 under the name of The Academy of Islam. In 1996, with a new location and building, the name of The Academy of Islam was changed to the Academy of Islamic Studies.It consists of ninedepartments-the Department of Fiqh and Usul, the Department of Siasah Syar'iyyah, the Department of Syariah and Economics, the Department of Syariah and Management and the Department of Syariah and Law, the Department of Al-Quran and Al-Hadith, the Department of Aqidah and Islamic Thought, the Department of Missionary and Human Development and the Department of Islamic History and Civilization. In addition to the nine departments, there are two academic programs, i.e., Islamic Education Program andapplied Sciences with Islamic Studies Program (APIUM 2011) [9].

Currently, There Are Six Undergraduate Programs: Bachelor of Syariah, Bachelor of Usuluddin, Bachelor of Islamic Education, Bachelor of Applied Sciences with Islamic Studies, Bachelor of Muamalat Management and Bachelor of Syariah and Law. In terms of academic administration and teaching, these six Bachelor programs are managed by the Undergraduate office and nine departmental Bachelor programs that are offered by the Academy of Islamic Studies offices [9].

Table 1: Number of PhD graduates of AISUM by year

Year	Number of Phd Graduates	Percentage (%)
1993	1	0.4
1994	1	0.4
1995	1	0.4
1997	1	0.4
1998	0	0
1999	5	2.1
2000	5	2.1
2001	4	1.6
2002	2	0.8
2003	6	2.5
2004	10	4.1
2005	16	6.6
2006	21	8.6
2007	22	9.1
2008	16	6.6
2009	34	14
2010	30	12.3
2011	68	28
TOTAL	243	100%

For postgraduate programs, AISUM offers a degree of Doctor of Philosophy (by research mode only) and three Master degrees, i.e., Master in Syariah, offered by mixed modes (coursework and dissertation) and research mode only (dissertation), Master in Usuluddin, offered by mixed modes (coursework and dissertation) and research mode only (dissertation) and Master in Islamic Studies offered by research mode only (dissertation). The postgraduate office and nine departmental offices of AISUM are responsible for academic administration and teaching, particularly for mixed mode Master degrees. The supervisors for PhD and Master candidates are appointed through nine departmental levels of AISUM and other faculties of UM in the case of co-supervision [9].

Although the establishment of AISUM took place in 1981, the output of postgraduate, particularly for PhD graduates (as a subject matter), only took place in 1993. This is mainly due to the low number of supervisors who held a PhD degree and also the fact there were only a few PhD candidates in Islamic Studies at AISUM at that time. However, after the new name or rebranding of the Academy of Islam (AI) as the Academy of Islamic Studies (AIS), which took place in 1996, eventually the number of PhD graduates significantly increased by 1999 and afterward. Table 1 reveals the distribution of PhD graduates of AISUM by year [10].

The total number of PhD graduates at AISUM from 1993 until 2011 was 243 (UM 2011). The average number of PhD graduates was 14 graduates per year.

The significant year for AISUM in graduating PhD candidates started was 2004, with 10 graduates (4.1%), which gradually increased in 2005 until 2007, as shown above. Although in 2008, the number slightly decreased to 16 graduates the number increased significantly in 2009 (34:14%), 2010 (30:12.3%) and 2011 (68:28%) [11].

The year 2011, 30 years since its establishment, was the most significant year for AISUM in terms of the large number of PhD graduates. It is important to note that in 2011, AISUM was reported as the most prolific faculty or academy of University Malaya in terms of the significant number of PhD graduates. As stated in the book of UM graduation in 2011, in total there were 309 PhD graduates, which were distributed by faculty or academy as follows: Academy of Islamic Studies: 68 graduates (22%), Academy of Malay Studies: 14 graduates (5%), Institute of Graduate Studies: 7 graduates (2%), Faculty of Built Environment: 2 graduates (0.6%), Faculty of Languages and Linguistics: 9 graduates (3%), Faculty of Economics and Administration: 14 graduates (5%), Faculty of Engineering: 27 graduates (9%), Faculty of Education: 29 graduates (9%), Faculty of Dentistry: 3 graduates (1.0%), Faculty of Business and Accountancy: 30 graduates (10%), Faculty of Medicine: 13 graduates (4%), Faculty of Science: 55 graduates (18%), Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology: 12 graduates (4%), Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences: 16 graduates (5%), Faculty of Law: 5 graduates (2%), Institute of Principalship Studies: 1 graduate (0.3%), Sports Centre: 3 graduates (1.0%) and Cultural Centre: 1 graduate (0.3%) (UM 2011) [12].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The fields of specialization in Islamic Studies for PhD graduates of AISUM are officially determined at the departmental level. However, PhD candidates are given the choice to choose the department as well as a potential supervisor during their submission of application. As a potential supervisor is attached to a department in accordance with their expertise, in effect, the department indicates the field of specialization for PhD graduates.

Table 2 below reveals the trend of specialization in Islamic Studies for PhD graduates of AISUM classified by year (from 1993 until 2010) and the departments. It can be seen that the three most popular fields of specialization in Islamic Studies for PhD graduates of AISUM for 1993 until 2010 were the field of Aqidah and Islamic Thought, the field of al-Quran and al-Hadith and the field of Fiqh and Usul. In other words,

Table 2: Field of Specialization in Islamic Studies for PhD graduates of AISUM classified by departments

Year	DQH	DAIT	DMHD	DIHC	DFU	DSL	DSE	DSM	DSS	Total	Percentage (%)
1993	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	0.4
1994	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.4
1995	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.4
1997	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.4
1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
1999	1	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	5	2.1
2000	-	-	1	3	1	-	-	-	-	5	2.1
2001	-	2	-	1		-	-	-	1	4	1.6
2002	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	0.8
2003	-	1	1	-	1	-	2	-	1	6	2.5
2004	5	2	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	10	4.1
2005	2	3	2	1	4	2	-	2	-	16	6.6
2006	5	6	2	3	2	1	1	1	-	21	8.6
2007	6	2	1	1	5	2	2	2	1	22	9.1
2008	5	2	1	-	4	1	2	-	1	16	6.6
2009	7	7	5	1	6	1	3	3	1	34	14
2010	3	7	-	3	10	3	2	1	1	30	12.3
2011	17	17	5	9	13	2	4	1	-	68	28
Total	52	53	20	22	50	14	16	10	6	243	100%
Percentage (%)	21	22	8	9	20	6	7	4	3		

Indication:

DQH: Department of al-Quran and al-Hadith;   DAIT: Department of Aqidah and Islamic Thought

DMHD: Department of Missionary and Human Development   DIHC: Department of Islamic History and Civilization

DFU: Department of Fiqh and Usul   DSL: Department of Syariah and Law

DSE: Department of Syariah and Economics   DSM: Department of Syariah and Management

DSS: Department of Siasah Syar'iyyah

the department of Aqidah and Islamic Thought is acknowledgedas the most prolific department in graduating PhD graduates at AISUM from 1993 until 2010 in producing some 53 graduates (22%) out of 243 graduates.This is followed by the department of al-Quran and al-Hadith,52 graduates (21%); and the department of Fiqh and Usul,50 graduates (20%). The main factorsunderlying these figuresincludethe accountability of the supervisors as well as their expertise to supervise their superviseesandthe professionalism of the postgraduate office.

The above table also reveals the trend of less popular fields of specialization in Islamic Studies for PhD graduates at AISUM from 1993 until 2010. The field of Siasah Syar'iyyah (Islamic Politics) and the field of Syariah and Management are acknowledgedas being less popular fields of specialization for Phd candidates for which there were only 6 PhD (3%) graduates and 10 PhD graduates (4%), respectively.The lownumber inthose particular fields mainlyrelates to the lownumber of supervisors in those particular fields. This fact really

affects the lowest number for PhD candidates to register in those fields and , thus, results in the low number of PhD graduates, as shown in the above table.

Apart from the most and the lowest number of PhD graduates in particular fields of specialization in Islamic Studies at AISUM, which is the obvious trend from 1993 until 2010, there is also a third trend, i.e., common or popular fields of specialization. The popular fieldsof specialization in Islamic Studies at AISUM are the field ofIslamic History and Civilizationfromwhich 22 PhD graduates (9%) graduatedbetween 1993 and2010, followed by the field of Missionary (*Da'wah*) and Human Development (20 PhD graduates: 8%). The field of Syariah and Economics is also a popular field of specialization in Islamic Studies producing a total of 16 (7%) PhD graduates from 1993 until 2010. The field of Syariah and Law is also categorized as popular with 14 PhD graduates (6%).These trends clearly indicate the multi fields of specialization in Islamic Studies at AISUM, which produced a number of PhD graduates between 1993 and 2010.

Table 3: PhD graduates according to Gender

Year	Male	Female	Total
1993	1	-	1
1994	1	-	1
1995	1	-	1
1997	1	-	1
1998	-	-	0
1999	5	-	5
2000	4	1	5
2001	4		4
2002	1	1	2
2003	6	-	6
2004	7	3	10
2005	11	5	16
2006	18	3	21
2007	20	2	22
2008	16	-	16
2009	32	2	34
2010	28	2	30
2011	59	9	68
Total	215	28	243/100%
Percentage (%)	88.5%	11.5%	

The consequence of this trend of fields of specialization in Islamic Studies, as discussed above, also reveals the trend of gender for PhD graduates at AISUM as shown below:

Table 3 demonstrates that the majorityof the 243 PhD graduates at AISUM were malegraduates,215(88.5%), with a small number of female graduates,28(11.5%). From 1993 until 2010, no particular year indicates a largenumber offemale PhD graduates except 2005 (5 female PhD graduates) and 2011 (9 female PhD graduates). The small number of female PhD graduate (28) and large number of male PhD graduates (215) at AISUM shows the imbalance of gender for experts in Islamic Studies. It can be learned from this fact ortrend that AISUM has produced fewer female PhD graduates in the30 years since its establishment.

Apart from the gender trend of PhD graduates, it is interesting to note the trend of nationality of PhD graduates at AISUM, as follows:

The variety of nationalitiesof PhD graduates signifies the internationalization for each academy or faculty as well as the university. The facts and figures from the above table clearly indicate the internationalization of AISUM for postgraduate studies. There are 25 nationalities as well as countries for PhD graduates of AISUM. As Universityof Malayahaspostgraduate International students from 78 countries (2,621 students), therefore AISUM contributes 20% (25 countries) out of the 78, particularly in terms of nationality of PhD graduates.

The table shows that Malaysian PhD graduates constitute the majority in terms of the number for nationality (127:52%) followed by Indonesianswith 42: 17% PhD graduates. Yemeni PhD graduates are the third highest number with 21 or 9% out of 243. There are small groups of nationalities of PhD graduates, which reflect the significance of AISUM as an excellent center for postgraduates such as Jordanians (8: 3%), Algerians (5: 2%), Bruneians (5: 2%), Saudi Arabians (4: 1.6%), Libyans (4: 1.6%), Iraqis (4: 1.6%), Omanis (3: 1%), Iranians (3: 1%),Thais(3: 1%) and Egyptians (2: 0.8%). There are also countries represented by 1 PhD graduate of AISUM, i.e., Tunisia, Ivory Coast, China, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, Kosovo, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Eritrea.

The table also indicates the trend of nationality by year for PhD graduates at AISUM from 1993 until 2011. Two countries-Malaysia and Yemen-rapidly increased in terms of the number of PhD graduates by year. In 2010, there were 13 Malaysian PhD graduates, which rapidly increased in 2011 to30 in total. Similarly, for Yemenis, in 2010, there were 5 PhD graduates,whichrapidly increasedto 10 PhD graduates in 2011. The increasing number of PhD graduates for both countries, particularly in 2011, indicates their passion of striving to complete the study within a limited number of years.

The trend of nationality for PhD graduates at AISUM, as discussed above, also reflects the trend of thesis languages for PhD graduates at AISUM from 1993 until 2010, as shownbelow:

The multilingual PhD theses at AISUM also indicate the internationalization of AISUM for postgraduate studies in Islamic Studies. There are three main languages of thesis at AISUM, i.e., Malay, Arabic and English. The above table presents the trend of multilingual PhD theses at AISUM by year. The Malay language is the main language for PhD thesis comprising 172 (70.8%) in total, followed by the Arabic language (60 theses: 24.7%) and English language (11 theses: 4.5%).

This finding also indicates there is a need to have a better management system in term of dealing with the record of higher Islamic Studies [13]. It is better to practice a good system which would certainly help our future if a proper record keeping is done. Moreover, it will be helpful if the Academy could provide staff with multilingual ability, so that the international 'stakeholder' would feel like home when they are studying here.

This is following the fact that there increasing number of PhD theses in Islamic Studies that have been written in Arabic, which started in 2008 (7 theses), 2009 (8 theses), 2010 (10 theses) and 2011 (26 theses).

Table 4: Nationality of PhD graduates

Year/Country	1993	1994	1995	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total	Percentage(%)
Malaysia	1	1	1	1	-	3	3	2	1	3	7	12	11	12	8	18	13	30	127	52
TUNISIA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.4
BRUNEI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	5	2
IVORY COAST	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.4
INDONESIA	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	1	3	6	7	2	7	6	6	42	17
JORDAN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	2	1	2	8	3
OMAN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	3	1
YEMEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	5	5	10	21	9
SAUDI ARABIA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	4	1.6
CHINA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	0.4
ALGERIA	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	5	2
BOSNIA	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.4
IRAQ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	4	1.6
IRAN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	1
AFGHANISTAN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.4
SYRIA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	0.4
EGYPT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	0.8
SUDAN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.4
THAILAND	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	3	1
KOSOVO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	0.4
QATAR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	0.4
LIBYA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	1.6
MALDIVES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	0.4
SRI LANKA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	0.4
ERITREA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	0.4
Total	1	1	1	1	0	5	5	4	2	6	10	16	21	22	16	34	30	68	243	100%

Table 5: Thesis languages

Year	Malay	Arabic	English	Total
1993	1	-	-	1
1994	1	-	-	1
1995	1	-	-	1
1997	1	-	-	1
1998	-	-	-	0
1999	4	-	1	5
2000	3	2	-	5
2001	4	-	-	4
2002	2	-	-	2
2003	5	1	-	6
2004	8	-	2	10
2005	15	1	-	16
2006	18	2	1	21
2007	19	3	-	22
2008	9	7	-	16
2009	25	8	1	34
2010	18	10	2	30
2011	38	26	4	68
TOTAL	172	60	11	243/100%
Percentage (%)	70.8	24.7	4.5	

In the case of English as a language of thesis at AISUM, it started in 1999 with only 1 thesis. However, from 2000 until 2003 there was no single thesis written in English except in 2004 (2 theses), 2006 (1 thesis), 2009 (1 thesis), 2010 (4 theses) and 2011 (4 theses). The fluctuation in thenumber of PhD theses that were written in English as well as in Malay and Arabic relates to the choice of PhD candidates upon their application at the time of registration.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals the achievement of AISUM over the 30 years since its establishment in producing PhD graduates in line with the development of fields of specialization in Islamic Studies that relate to the departments of the Academy. The focus on the trends of PhD graduates and fields of specialization in Islamic Studies at AISUM signifies its contribution as a leading postgraduate institution of Islamic Studies in Malaysia.

From 1993 until 2010, AISUM produced 243 PhD graduates with ninemain fields of specialization in Islamic Studies, which is in line with thenine departments of AISUM. The achievement of AISUM in producing 68 PhD graduates in 2011 indicates the most prolific academy or faculty in UM, contributing 22% out of 309 University Malaya PhD graduates. The yearly increase in PhD graduates in Islamic Studies at AISUM clearly affirms its significant contribution to the establishment of University Malaya as a top research university not just in Malaysia but internationally. The trend in the variety of nationalities for PhD graduates contributes to the process of internationalization of AISUM as a postgraduate research center in Islamic Studies.

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