



## Enhancing Public Accountability Through Stakeholder Participation: Evidence from an Islamic Higher Education Institutions in the Hadith Studies Program at Iain Langsa

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**ABSTRACT:** Public accountability has become a central concern in higher education governance, yet stakeholder engagement in Islamic higher education institutions remains underexplored. This study aims to analyze how stakeholder participation enhances public accountability in the Hadith Science Study Program at IAIN Langsa. A qualitative case-study approach was employed, involving 30 purposively selected informants representing internal and external stakeholders, including lecturers, students, alumni, graduate users, administrators, community leaders, and government representatives. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis, and validated using triangulation and member checking. The findings reveal that stakeholder involvement significantly strengthens transparency, responsiveness, curriculum relevance, and institutional legitimacy. Stakeholders contribute through academic feedback, performance evaluation, curriculum alignment with labor- market needs, and policy support. However, accountability enhancement is constrained by limited resources, weak communication platforms, and uneven stakeholder awareness. This study provides empirical evidence that participatory governance plays a critical role in fostering accountable management in Islamic higher education institutions.

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**KEYWORDS:**  
IAIN Langsa, public accountability, stakeholder participation, Islamic higher education, governance.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are increasingly required to demonstrate accountability not only to regulatory bodies but also to broader societal stakeholders. Global reforms emphasize transparency, performance measurement, and participatory governance (Leveille, 2016; Burke, 2004). In Indonesia, Islamic higher education institutions (PTKI) face additional pressures to balance religious legitimacy with modern academic standards.

Despite extensive studies on accountability in higher education, limited attention has been given to stakeholder engagement within Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. Existing literature largely focuses on Western or secular universities, overlooking faith-based governance structures that shape accountability differently (Mainardes et al., 2020). This study addresses this gap by investigating stakeholder participation in enhancing accountability in the Hadith Studies Program at IAIN Langsa.

#### Novelty:

This research is among the first empirical studies to link stakeholder participation with public accountability mechanisms in an Islamic higher education study program context in Indonesia

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

#### Public Accountability in Higher Education

Recent global studies (2018–2024) stress accountability as a multidimensional construct involving transparency, responsiveness,

performance legitimacy, and participatory oversight (Christensen & Lægreid, 2019; Hall et al., 2021; Kivistö, 2018).

#### Stakeholder Theory in Educational Governance

Stakeholder theory has shifted from corporate governance to public-sector accountability frameworks (Mainardes et al., 2020; Jongbloed et al., 2018). Universities are now seen as multi- actor ecosystems requiring stakeholder inclusion for legitimacy.

#### Accountability in Religious-Based Institutions

Faith-based institutions face dual accountability pressures: moral legitimacy and administrative compliance.

#### Explicit Contribution to Stakeholder Theory:

This study expands stakeholder theory by demonstrating that in Islamic higher education contexts, stakeholder participation functions not merely as governance support but as a religiously embedded legitimacy mechanism that shapes accountability structures.

### 3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Stakeholder Participation → Transparency Mechanisms → Responsiveness → Institutional Accountability → Public Trust & Legitimacy

Actors:

Internal → lecturers, students, administrators External → alumni, employers, community, government

### 4. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Qualitative case study (Creswell, 2014). Informants (30 Participants, Purposive Criteria)

- 6 lecturers (min. 5 years teaching)
- 8 students (academically active)
- 5 alumni (working in religious/educational sectors)
- 5 graduate users/employers
- 4 administrators
- 2 community leaders

Data Collection: Interviews, observation, document analysis

Validity Procedures

- Source triangulation
- Method triangulation
- Member checking
  - Document verification

Ethical Statement

This research followed academic ethical standards: informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and institutional approval from IAIN Langsa. All participants gave informed consent; confidentiality and voluntary participation were ensured.

### 5. RESULTS

#### 5.1 Internal Stakeholder Contributions

- Lecturers ensured curriculum accountability and performance reporting.
- Students provided structured evaluative feedback.
- Administrators strengthened service transparency.

#### 5.2 External Stakeholder Contributions

- Alumni linked curriculum to labor-market needs.
- Employers validated graduate competencies.
- Government enforced accreditation compliance.
- Community legitimized social accountability.

### 6. DISCUSSION

Stakeholder contributions were effective because they created reciprocal monitoring, strengthened legitimacy, and aligned academic outputs with societal needs. These findings support Bovens' accountability chain and extend stakeholder theory into Islamic governance.

#### Internal Critique:

Participation remains uneven; alumni involvement lacks institutionalization; accountability still accreditation-driven.

**Theoretical Implications:**

Expands stakeholder theory to religious HE governance  
Demonstrates participatory accountability as legitimacy capital

**Limitations:**

Single case; qualitative scope; context-specific.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Stakeholder participation significantly enhances public accountability in Islamic higher education. The Hadith Studies Program at IAIN Langsa demonstrates that accountability is co-produced through collaborative engagement between academic actors and external stakeholders. However, structural constraints must be addressed to sustain accountability beyond procedural compliance.

**Theoretical Implications**

Integrate stakeholder theory with Islamic accountability frameworks Develop participatory accountability models for PTKI

**Policy Implications**

- Ministry of Religious Affairs should institutionalize stakeholder-based governance across Islamic universities
- Regional PTKI accreditation systems should mandate stakeholder engagement mechanisms
- Strengthen alumni–employer partnerships nationally

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