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Parents' Motivation in Choosing Islamic Boarding Schools as Educational Institutions for Their Children in a Muslim Majority Country

Muhammad Hakim Parta¹, Ilham Mulyadi²

¹Al-Azhar University, Egypt ²Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Indonesia

Ankimparta@gmail.com *

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Abstract

Continuing children's education is a responsibility of every parent, including choosing the right educational institution, one of which is an Islamic boarding school. This study aims to identify the motivations of parents and children in choosing an Islamic boarding school as an educational institution. This research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were obtained from eight informants through direct interviews using a set of interview protocols. Overall, the results revealed seven main themes regarding parents' and children's motivations in choosing Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions. These themes are divided into three parental motivation themes and four child motivation themes. The three parental motivations are: i) strengthening the child's religious foundation, ii) avoiding negative social influences, and iii) the desire to shape the child into a better person. Furthermore, the four themes of children's motivation are: i) self-initiative, ii) parental encouragement, iii) deepening religious knowledge, and iv) the aspiration to become a hafidz or hafidzah. The findings of this study suggest that effective communication and value alignment between parents and children may play an important role in decision-making regarding faithbased education.

INTRODUCTION

Everyone should receive education. KH Dewantara argues that education is all efforts from parents to children with the intention of supporting the progress of their lives (Abidin, 2022; Jailani, 2014). Parents are one of the driving factors for children's education, Allah has explained that educating children is a basic need and an obligation for parents, in Q.S At Tahrim verse 6 as follows:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

Meaning: "O you who believe, protect yourself and your family from the fires of hell whose fuel is humans and stones".

According to Azizah et al (2023); Raharjo (2024), parents are responsible for the lives of children, even parents are responsible for the education of children who teach religious teachings and *akhlakul karimah*. To instill the teachings of *akhlakul karimah* and make children knowledgeable is not easy and cannot be done alone.

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Therefore, the motivation of parents arises to enroll their children in educational institutions (Zulkhaidir & Mubarok, 2021). Taofik (2021); Zulmuqim (2017) state that an educational institution is an institution or place where an educational process takes place to change behavior towards a better individual through interaction with the surrounding environment. Meanwhile, an Islamic educational institution is a place or organization that organizes Islamic education, has a clear structure, and is responsible for the implementation of Islamic education.

The decision of parents to choose Islamic boarding schools as children's educational institutions is due to the desire of parents to choose a better education (Diadha, 2015; Nudin, 2016; Nufus et al., 2019). This is because children get a much better education than what they get from their parents and also so that children can prepare themselves sufficiently in life (Hadlori et al., 2020; Hidayat & Syafe'i, 2018; Nudin, 2016; Wahidin, 2017; Zulkhaidir & Mubarok, 2021). The increasing interest of children and parents in education at Islamic boarding schools shows that many parents believe that religious education is indispensable to the development of the world of education today. Parents value religious knowledge as a strong foundation for forming good morals so that when problems occur in adulthood, children will have a handle on finding solutions with Islamic religious rules.

Therefore, the author wanted to understand what motivates parents and children in choosing Islamic boarding schools as a place to study. The research focused on institutions that are still developing but have shown increasing interest and student numbers over time.

As stated by the author in the introduction to this article, motivation is a state of giving encouragement to someone in behaving to achieve goals (Alimudin, 2022; Emda, 2018; Kalsum et al., 2023; Kiefer et al., 2015; Suharni, 2021). It is also characterized by feelings or reactions to achieve a goal (Jailani, 2014; Mulyaningsih, 2014; Oktiani, 2017; Usman, 2017).

According to Gazali (2018); Syahroni (2024), motivation is the overall driving force or as a driving force from within that appears and is the key to success. Every parent has motivation in choosing a further education institution for their child (Devianti et al., 2020; Sholeh, 2018; Siregar, 2017). According to Najiyyah et al (2024), the results of the study found six motivations for parents to send their children to Islamic boarding schools: so that children have good morals, a feeling of not being able to educate children at home, being a member of junior high school MTA, the comfort of experience as an junior high school MTA student, cheap boarding fees, and belief in the most correct agreement as an junior high school MTA.

According to Suarta & Rahayu (2018), the results of his research stated that the motivation of students to enter Islamic boarding schools was quite high with a proportion of 63% intrinsic motivation and 52% extrinsic motivation (Devianti et al., 2020; Faujiah et al., 2018; Novrinda et al., 2017; Siregar, 2017; Suarta & Rahayu, 2018). Related to the problems that the authors discuss in this study, it is necessary to explain the motivations of parents and children to choose Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions, and this research has been widely discussed before by other researchers. However, research that has been conducted by other researchers only discusses the motivation of parents to choose Islamic boarding schools, or increasing motivation to study at Islamic boarding schools (Hasanudin et al., 2024; Mawaddati, 2021; Muzayin & Kuswandi, 2015).

Specifically, in this study, the authors focus on the motivation of parents and children in choosing Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions. Based on

the author's considerations, this research needs to be carried out and discussed in depth. This research is not only about motivation in choosing Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions but also adds to the body of knowledge, especially discussing the motivations of parents and children in choosing educational institutions. In fact, research and issues related to the motivational aspects of parents and children choosing Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions have been widely studied. However, many previous studies have only focused on parental motivation in children's moral education and as a means of education.

For example, the motivation of parents to choose Islamic boarding schools as a means of moral education for children in (Adila & Darmaningrum, 2023); the motivation of parents to choose Islamic boarding schools as a means of education for children (Anwar, 2017); the motivation of parents in choosing to send their children to Islamic boarding schools (Mulyaningsih, 2014); the motivation of parents making Islamic boarding schools a place to foster *akhlakul karimah* for their children (Syafitri et al., 2022); and the motivation of students to continue their education at Islamic boarding schools (Herawati & Yani, 2014). All the results of the research above can be interpreted that the motivation of parents and students to choose Islamic boarding schools has several aspects, namely for moral education, the development of *akhlakul karimah*, and as a means of education.

To strengthen the novelty and research direction, a bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer was conducted to map previous studies related to motivation, students, and Islamic boarding schools. The visualization results (Figure 1) show that the dominant themes in previous studies are concentrated around "student," "school," "education," and "motivation," indicating that studies discussing both parental and student motivation simultaneously are still limited. This finding reinforces the urgency of conducting this research to fill the identified gap.

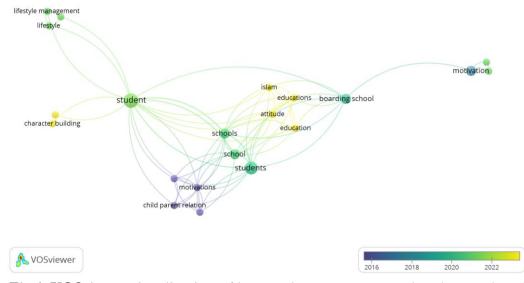


Fig 1. VOSviewer visualization of keyword co-occurrence related to students' and parents' motivation in Islamic boarding school studies.

Building on the bibliometric findings, this study aims to explore comprehensively the motivations of both parents and students in choosing Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions. By combining theoretical perspectives, previous studies, and empirical data, this research is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of motivational dynamics in Islamic educational settings.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative method with a case study approach. According to Bartlett & Vavrus (2016); Crowe et al (2011); De Maeseneer (2018); Murniyetti et al (2016); Taylor (2013), a case study is a type of research design used when the researcher intends to observe a phenomenon or event in depth, either involving individuals or groups. Referring to these opinions, and considering the issues and problems raised in this study, this research design is deemed appropriate.

Data were collected from eight informants consisting of parents and students, selected using a purposive sampling technique. According to Fitri et al (2016); Rompas (2013); Wahyuni (2017), the selection of informants must meet four criteria: being active in the relevant field, having competence related to the research problem, being willing to provide time for interviews, and providing honest information in accordance with actual conditions.

After the interviews were completed, all data were transcribed, and themes were identified in accordance with the objectives and needs of the study. According to Terry et al (2017), thematic analysis is an analytical technique that allows researchers to analyze interview results so that patterns can be clearly identified and easily understood by readers. The entire process of thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 qualitative analysis software. The use of NVivo 12 aimed to visualize the research results (themes) through graphics and figures generated by the software. Thematic analysis assisted by NVivo allows researchers to systematically organize and present research findings (Allsop et al., 2022; Dhakal, 2022; Zamawe, 2015).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As the author explained earlier, motivation does not only come from parents, there must also be motivation from the students themselves, because we know that some motivations are internally driven and some are externally driven. Based on the results of the author's interviews with eight informants, the results of the analysis significantly found that there were three motivations from parents and four motivations from students. The three motivations of these parents can be seen from Figure 1 below:

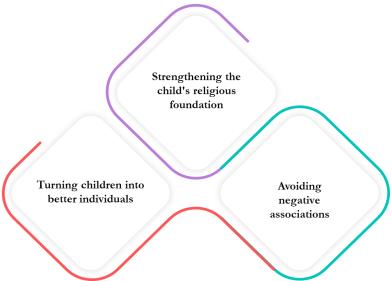


Fig 2. Description of parents' motivation for choosing Islamic boarding schools

Based on Figure 1 it can be explained that after conducting in-depth interviews with informants, there are three motivations for parents to choose Islamic boarding

schools, the three themes are i) strengthening the child's religious foundation, ii) avoiding negative associations and iii) turning children into better individuals.

To make it more interesting, in the following the author will present excerpts of interviews with informants based on the three themes described above. The description of the interview that the author will present is a brief statement excerpt from the informant at the time of the interview. Even though the interview excerpts are different, they actually have more or less the same purpose and intent.

The first theme is strengthening the child's religious foundation, according to the informant, one of their motivations for choosing Islamic boarding schools is because parents want their children to strengthen their religious foundation (Adila & Darmaningrum, 2023; Lestari et al., 2019; Muhammad et al., 2023; Nurkhasanah, 2017). Furthermore, following the explanation of one parent, he explained:

"One of my motivations for enrolling my children in Islamic boarding schools is that I want my children to be able to strengthen their religious foundations (Informant 1)."

The second theme, namely avoiding negative associations, is one of the motivations for parents to choose Islamic boarding schools because the informants want their children to avoid association in this day and age. Furthermore, following the explanation of some parents, he explained:

"Nowadays it is difficult to control children's associations, by being put in Islamic boarding schools, God willing, you can avoid these associations (Informant 1). There are many associations that cannot be avoided in today's children and at the Islamic boarding school in the dormitory which makes the child's association only with his dormitory friends (Informant 2)."

Third theme, turning children into good individuals, surely every parent wants their children to change for the better, informants think about the changes that occur when children are in Islamic boarding schools. Furthermore, following the explanation of some parents, he explained;

"The motivation to enter into the Islamic boarding school is a change within him, initially something like this can be better in the future (Informant 1). Mother wants this child to be able to change for the better in everyday behavior and change in the way she dresses (Informant 2)."

Furthermore, the four motivations of children choosing Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions, these themes can be seen in Figure 3 below:



Fig 3. Description of children's motivation to choose Islamic boarding schools

Based on the picture above it can be explained that there are four motivations for children to choose Islamic boarding schools, the four themes are, i) self-desire, ii) encouragement from parents, iii) deepening religious knowledge, iv) becoming *hafidz* and *hafidzah*.

The descriptions that the author will display are excerpts from short statements from informants when the interviews were conducted. Although the interview excerpts are different, they actually have more or less the same purpose and intent.

The first theme is self-desire, according to the informant one of their motivations for choosing an Islamic boarding school is their own will. Next, the

following is the explanation of one of the students, he explained:

"The choice to enter a boarding school has always been wanting to enter a boarding school and that was my own will (Information 4)."

The second theme, encouragement from parents. According to the informant, parents' encouragement was one of their motivations for choosing a boarding school. Initially one of them was not interested in entering the Islamic boarding school, after encouragement and motivation from their parents, they proposed to study at the Islamic boarding school. The following is the explanation of some students:

"Because in my environment there are many who attend Islamic boarding schools, that's why my parents want me to go there too (Informant 3). At first I was not interested in entering the Islamic boarding school, but my parents wanted me to enter. entered the Islamic boarding school and finally I went to school there until now (Informant 8)."

The third theme is to deepen religious knowledge. This is one of the motivations of several informants to choose Islamic boarding schools, namely to deepen their knowledge of religion. The following is an explanation from one of the students:

"As Muslims, there is certainly a lot that has to be studied about religious issues, maybe Islamic boarding schools would be more suitable for understanding and exploring these sciences (Informant 5)."

Fourth theme, namely becoming a hafidz and hafidzah, according to the informant, their motivation for choosing this Islamic boarding school was because they wanted to become memorizers of the Quran later. Furthermore, following the explanation of one of the students, he explained;

"I wanted to memorize the Quran so that my parents could go to heaven, so I chose a boarding school to focus more on memorizing the Quran (Informant 6)."

Related to the motivation of parents and children in choosing Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions, the research findings clearly reveal two main motivational aspects, consisting of three parental motivations and four student motivations. To provide a deeper understanding, these seven motivations are further discussed based on theoretical perspectives, expert opinions, and previous studies that address similar contexts and issues.

At the beginning of this section, the author describes parents' motivation for choosing Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions. There are three main motivations identified:

First, strengthening the religious foundation. Every parent certainly wants their children to strengthen the religious foundation they already have. According to previous studies Fauziah, (2017); Hasanah & Wahyuni (2024); Herawati & Yani (2014); Salik & Mas'ud (2020), parents expect their children to possess adequate religious knowledge, not only general knowledge, so that they can be responsible members of society and continue to pray for their parents after they pass away. Similarly, Alimudin (2022); Hawi (2017); Kalsum et al (2023); Sulistyoko (2018) found that parents desire a balance between general and religious education for their children. This idea is reflected in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Qashash (28:77):

...وَابْتَغ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا

Meaning: Seek, through what Allah has granted you, the home of the Hereafter, and do not forget your share of the world; and do good as Allah has done good to you, and do not seek corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters. (Qur'an Translation, Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2012)

This verse emphasizes the need for balance between worldly life and the

Hereafter. Worldly life serves as a means to attain the afterlife (Mardiyah, 2012; Ngabekti et al., 2012; Sugandi et al., 2017; Suhardi, 2013). By maintaining balance between both, life becomes more peaceful and purposeful (Fauziah, 2017; Littman-Ovadia, 2019). Hence, balancing general and religious knowledge is a divine command mentioned in the Qur'an, which becomes a key consideration for parents when selecting schools for their children (Anwar, 2017; Gazali, 2018; Muhayana, 2022; Sholeh, 2018; Siregar, 2017; Syahroni, 2024).

Second, avoiding negative associations. Parents generally do not want their children to be involved in harmful social environments. Therefore, one of their main motivations is to send their children to Islamic boarding schools to protect them from negative influences. Various youth problems such as drug abuse, promiscuity, and theft have become major concerns (Gazali, 2018; Jailani, 2014; Syahroni, 2024; Yakin, 2017). According to Kurniawan (2016); Raharjo (2024), preventive efforts can be both internal and external. Internal measures include implementing strict school regulations and conducting religious activities, while external measures involve collaboration with community organizations and counseling programs.

Third, encouraging internal change. Parents hope that enrolling their children in Islamic boarding schools will help them develop better character, manners, and self-discipline. Informants noted that these changes include improvements in dress, speech, and behavior, which reflect moral transformation nurtured through religious-based education.

Furthermore, the researcher also identified four main motivations of students in choosing Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions:

First, self-will. According to Almuin et al (2017); Astutik (2017); Maulidin (2024); Panjaitan et al (2020), intrinsic motivation plays a vital role in education. The willingness to study comes primarily from within oneself, influencing both the choice of educational institution and the commitment to learning. Herawati & Yani (2014); Syarifah (2017) also emphasized that students' self-motivation often stems from a desire to pursue better education and personal development.

Second, parental encouragement. Some students admitted that they were initially not interested in enrolling in Islamic boarding schools. However, through effective communication and guidance from their parents, they eventually decided to continue their education there. The role of parents as motivators is crucial, as they are the first teachers in a child's life and influence their educational and career decisions (Damayanti, 2023; Fauziah, 2017; Martin et al., 2014; Najiyyah et al., 2024; Tyaningsih & Yurna, 2024). Research by Almuin et al (2017); Maulidin (2024) confirms that motivation plays an essential role in sustaining children's learning success. When parents provide positive encouragement, children develop a stronger desire to learn and achieve excellence.

Third, deepening religious knowledge. Students expressed a desire to enhance their understanding of Islam, which became a major reason for choosing Islamic boarding schools (Marza, 2017; Putri et al., 2021; Sakai & Isbah, 2014; Warner, 2010). Typically, the curriculum in Islamic boarding schools focuses on Islamic sciences, including Qur'anic exegesis (Tafsir), Hadith, Aqidah Akhlak, Fiqh, Usul al-Fiqh, Islamic history, and Arabic (Nofiaturrahmah, 2017; Zulkifli, 2017). This motivation is also supported by the Qur'an, Surah At-Taubah (9:122):

... وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِثُونَ لَيَنْفِرُوا كَافَّةً

Meaning: And it is not for the believers to go forth all at once. For there should separate from every division of them a group to obtain understanding in the religion and warn their people when they return to them, that they might be cautious. (Qur'an

Translation, Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2012)

Fourth, becoming a hafidz or hafidzah (memorizer of the Qur'an). According to the informants, one of their strongest motivations is the desire to memorize the Qur'an, with the hope of bringing blessings and honor to their parents in the Hereafter. This motivation is supported by the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

Meaning: Whoever reads the Qur'an, learns it, and practices it, his parents will be given a crown of light on the Day of Judgment, whose brightness is like that of the sun..." (Narrated by Al-Hakim, 1/756, authenticated by Al-Albani).

Furthermore, Surah Al-Qamar (54:22) also highlights:

Meaning: And We have certainly made the Qur'an easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember? (Qur'an Translation, Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2012)

According to Abusyairi (2015); Al Baqi et al (2017); Astutik (2017), memorizing the Qur'an is a spiritual necessity and a lifelong commitment. Islamic boarding schools support this process by applying various memorization methods such as *jama'*, *wahdah*, *bil al-nadzar*, and *takrir* (Akbar & Hidayatullah, 2016; Fuadi & Mirsal, 2023; Madoni & Mardliyah, 2021; Nugroho, 2016; Rozi & Hasanah, 2021; Widiastuti & Kartika, 2017).

CONCLUSION

This study revealed seven key motivational factors influencing parents and students in choosing Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions. The findings indicate three primary motivations from parents, namely the desire to strengthen their children's religious foundation, to protect them from negative social influences, and to encourage positive personal transformation. Meanwhile, four motivations were identified from students, which include intrinsic desire, parental encouragement, the aspiration to deepen religious understanding, and the goal of becoming hafidz or hafidzah. These motivations collectively reflect the integral role of Islamic education in shaping students' moral, spiritual, and personal development.

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Author Contribution

Muhammad Hakim Parta: Writing-Preparation of original manuscript, Conceptualization, Investigation, Visualization, **Ilham Mulyadi:** Methodology, Improve Content, Data accuracy, Improve Language.

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The data and language usage in this article have been validated and verified by English language experts and no AI-generated sentences are included in this article.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that this research was conducted without any conflict of interest in the research.

Ethical Clearance

The place or location studied has agreed to conduct research and is willing if the results of this study are published.

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