

What Matters More: Religious Values or Academic Excellence? A Conjoint Analysis of Parental Priorities in Islamic Education

Anjani Wira Murti ^{a,1,*}, Purwanto ^{a,2}, Awan Kostrad Diharto ^{a,3}, Deddy Ramdhani ^{b,4}, Muhammad Badat Alauddin ^{c,5}

^a Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia

^b Universitas Islam Negeri Mataram, Mataram, Indonesia

^c International Islamic University Islamabad, Islamabad, Pakistan

¹ anjanimurti13@gmail.com; ² purwanto.dr@staff.uinsaid.ac.id; ³ awan_kostrad@yahoo.com; ⁴ deddyramdhani@uinmataram.ac.id; ⁵ alao.bs2645@iiu.edu.pk

* Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates parental preferences in selecting integrated Islamic educational institutions in Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara, particularly among career-oriented parents who face challenges in directly supervising their children's education. The research aims to identify the most dominant attribute influencing parental preferences and to evaluate the extent to which these attributes contribute to the decision-making process. A quantitative method was employed using conjoint analysis. Data were collected from 100 mothers of kindergarten-aged children residing in Mataram, selected through quota sampling. A questionnaire was used for data collection, and the analysis was conducted using conjoint analysis with a multiple linear regression approach via SPSS. The results indicate that among six evaluated attributes; school quality, teacher quality, school image, service quality, location, and cost only teacher quality and school location significantly influence parental preferences. Among these, teacher quality emerged as the most dominant factor. Collectively, the six attributes accounted for 76.8% of the variance in parental preference, while the remaining 23.2% was influenced by factors outside the research model. These findings underscore the importance of teacher competence and accessibility in shaping school choice decisions, offering valuable insights for educational institutions aiming to attract and retain students through improved staffing and strategic location planning.

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1. Introduction

Based on information from the mass media, *Republika*, in recent years the city of Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara, has experienced rapid growth in the number and popularity of integrated Islamic schools, until 2007 there were around 90 integrated Islamic schools established in the West Nusa Tenggara region, covering various levels of education, from early childhood education to high school [1]. This phenomenon reflects the increasing interest of parents in education that integrates Islamic values into the general curriculum [2].

Social dynamics in the city of Mataram also encourage changes in educational orientation, where people are now increasingly aware of the importance of education that not only focuses on academic aspects, but also strengthens religious values and character. This can be seen in the increasing number of integrated Islamic education institutions that have emerged as an alternative choice for parents to educate their children. This phenomenon reflects the changing preferences of communities that want holistic education [3]. In addition, the integrated curriculum between Islamic values and modern science is a special attraction for parents [4]. Evolving educational facilities, ongoing training for educators, and the achievement of "A" accreditation from BAN-S/M in a number of schools also strengthens the reputation of integrated Islamic schools in the eyes of the community [5].

In addition to internal school factors, another social change that has influenced parents' preferences in the city of Mataram is the increasing number of parents who have careers, recorded from data from the Central Bureau of Statistics of West Nusa Tenggara province, which shows that the working population in August 2024 was 3.11 million people, an increase of 212.57 thousand people compared to August 2023 (BPS online, 2024). Deputy Mayor of Mataram, Mohan Roliskana in *Republika*, said that sending children to integrated Islamic schools has become a trend for parents in big cities. Busy work is the main reason for leaving children in integrated Islamic schools, considering the quality of learning and the strengthening of characters taught [6]. This condition causes parents to need educational institutions that not only emphasize academic aspects but are also able to become partners in holistically educating children's character [7]. This shows that an increasing number of parents in Mataram City work full-time, so they tend to choose educational institutions that can provide services that facilitate them in terms of time and flexibility.

However, there is a problem with parents' preferences when choosing an integrated Islamic education institution. Most parents who are busy with their careers often experience confusion in choosing the right school for their children, given their busy schedule from morning to evening, which makes it difficult to directly oversee the child's educational process [8]. As in the journal article written by Nur Asiah that parents have a busy day from morning to evening, this busyness makes them expect an institution that is able to pay more attention to their children while at school [9]. Limited parental supervision of children's education is the main basis for sending their children to institutions with educational models that implement a full-day system [10]. Integrated Islamic schools can provide solutions to people who are busy with activities and work [11].

In addition, in the midst of rampant promiscuity, parents flock to send their children to boarding schools so that their children can study religion well. However, over time, many cases of sexual violence have occurred in Indonesia, including in boarding schools [12]. For example, the *Al-Ikhlas Tahfidz* boarding school and the *Madani* boarding school in Bandung are two boarding schools that are currently rampant cases of sexual harassment [13]. This condition makes parents rethink sending their children to boarding schools but still want to send their children to Islamic schools [14]. Parents who are worried about the negative impacts of the times and those who doubt the educational institutions of boarding schools and public schools today are trying to find solutions and begin to open their views on the education of their children through educational institutions that are considered capable of overcoming the various problems that make them worried.

According to Hasan, integrated Islamic educational institutions are an alternative to address parents' concerns [15]. Some factors that influence this preference include school quality, teacher quality, school image, service, location, and tuition fees. 1) School quality is important because good education builds character, improves critical thinking skills, and builds self-confidence [16]. 2)

Teacher quality is very influential because teachers are the main role models in conveying values and knowledge [17]. 3) The image of the school determines the community's perception of the quality of the institution, including its achievements, environment, and the values taught [18]. 4) School services such as comfortable facilities and friendly and empathetic teachers can foster student learning motivation [19]; 5) school location is a consideration because it is directly related to accessibility, time efficiency, and transportation costs [20]; and 6) the cost of education, although not the main factor, is still a consideration because it is related to the facilities and services received [21], [22].

In this regard, the results of interviews with several parents in Mataram City corroborate that they chose integrated Islamic schools because of their desire to provide balanced religious and general education, as well as the support of a full-day system that suits their busy lives. Mrs. Hanik and Mrs. Nuhla, for example, stated that they like integrated Islamic schools because they prioritize religious education, active learning methods such as project-based learning and experiential learning, as well as an intensive Qur'an memorization approach. Parents' awareness of the importance of quality and character education is increasing. This is reflected in the high interest in integrated Islamic education institutions as a comprehensive educational solution relevant to the needs of the times [23], [24]. Many attributes are considered by parents, and for this reason, an analytical approach is needed that can map these preferences objectively.

Based on the above background and the many attributes that are taken into consideration by parents in sending their children to integrated Islamic institutions, such as school quality, teachers, image, services, location, and cost affect parents' preferences in Mataram City. Therefore, in this study, researchers used conjoint analysis to determine the preferences of parents in sending their children to integrated Islamic educational institutions in Mataram City, so this research needs to be done to understand more deeply the preferences of parents in choosing integrated Islamic educational institutions. This research is expected to provide an overview of the factors that influence parents' decisions and the level of contribution of each factor. Thus, the results of this study can be used to evaluate and consider managers of integrated Islamic educational institutions to improve quality and services in accordance with community expectations. Based on the limitations of the problem, the problem can be formulated as to what attribute factors are most dominant in influencing parents' preferences in choosing an integrated Islamic education institution and how much does the attribute factor contribute to parents' preferences in choosing an integrated Islamic education institution?

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study used quantitative research with conjoint analysis. This type of research is typically conducted to understand the relationship between the characteristics or attributes of products offered to consumers and consumer preferences for combinations of these attributes. This method involves collecting data on consumer preferences for various combinations of product attributes such as school quality, teacher quality, school image, school service quality, school location, tuition fees, and duration of study time.

2.2. Participants or Subjects

The population in this study consisted of parents of children of kindergarten school age who resided in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara. The population in this study cannot be known with certainty; therefore, in determining the sample in this study, non-probability sampling was carried out using a combination of purposive sampling techniques and accidental sampling techniques. The purposive sampling technique is a sampling technique uses certain considerations in accordance with the desired criteria to determine the number of samples to be studied. The accidental sampling technique is a sampling technique with not considered as the basis, but only by chance [25]. In this study, the sample criteria included parents; the parents in question were mothers who lived in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara, and mothers who had children of kindergarten school age.

2.3. Materials and Instruments

Data were collected using a questionnaire. The research instrument consisted of a questionnaire designed with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The core items in the questionnaire were a combination of product attributes such as school quality, teacher quality, school image, school service quality, school location, tuition fees, and duration of study time. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms to kindergarten children's mothers to facilitate rapid and extensive data collection.

2.4. Analisis Data

The collected data were analyzed using conjoint analysis techniques with a multiple linear regression approach to determine the most dominant independent variable influencing the dependent variable. The conjoint analysis method is used to determine the preferences of parents of students in choosing an Integrated Islamic Education Institution in Mataram City NTB against priorities that are a combination of several attributes. The choice of this method is based on the research objectives in obtaining the priority value of consumer preferences for the combination of attributes of a product or service to be taken into consideration that affect consumer behavior in decision making. The results of the conjoint analysis in this study were assisted using SPSS 25.0 for windows software.

3. Results and Discussion

This section describes the results of the data displayed in the form of diagrams in which there are seven variables, namely school quality, teacher quality, school image, school service quality, school location, school fees, and parents' preferences in choosing an integrated Islamic education institution, and then discusses them in accordance with the problem formulation. The following is a description of the data processing results for each variable: The following is a description of the results of the data processing for each variable.

a. School Quality (X1)

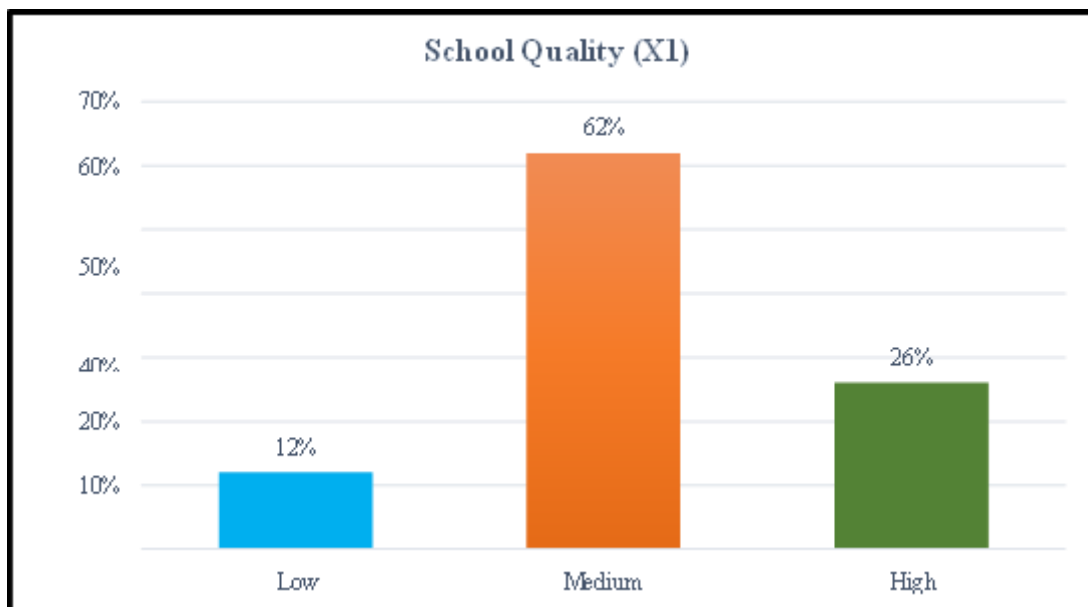


Fig.1. Frequency Diagram of School Quality (X1)

Based on Fig.1, it can be illustrated that out of 100 respondents who live in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara, and have children of kindergarten school age, 12 mothers (12%) stated that school quality was low, 62 mothers (62%) stated that school quality was moderate, and 26 mothers (26%) stated that school quality was high.

b. Teacher Quality (X2)

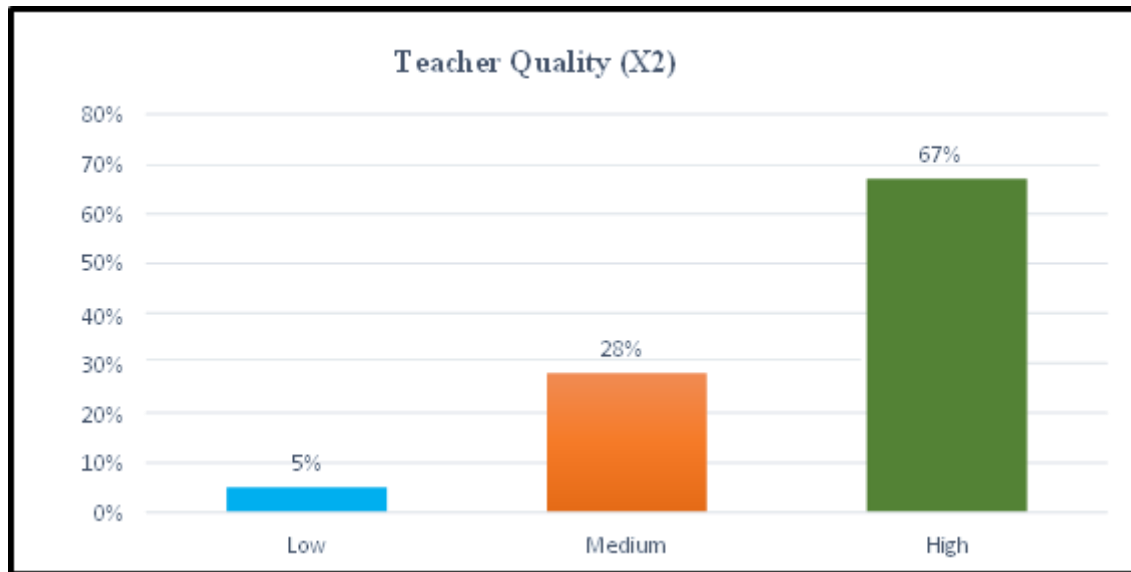


Fig.2. Frequency Diagram of Teacher Quality (X2)

In Fig.2, it can be explained that out of 100 mothers who live in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara, and have children of kindergarten school age, there are five mothers (5%) who think the quality of teachers is low, 28 mothers (28%) think the quality of teachers is moderate, and as many as 67 mothers (67%) think the quality of teachers is high.

c. School Image (X3)

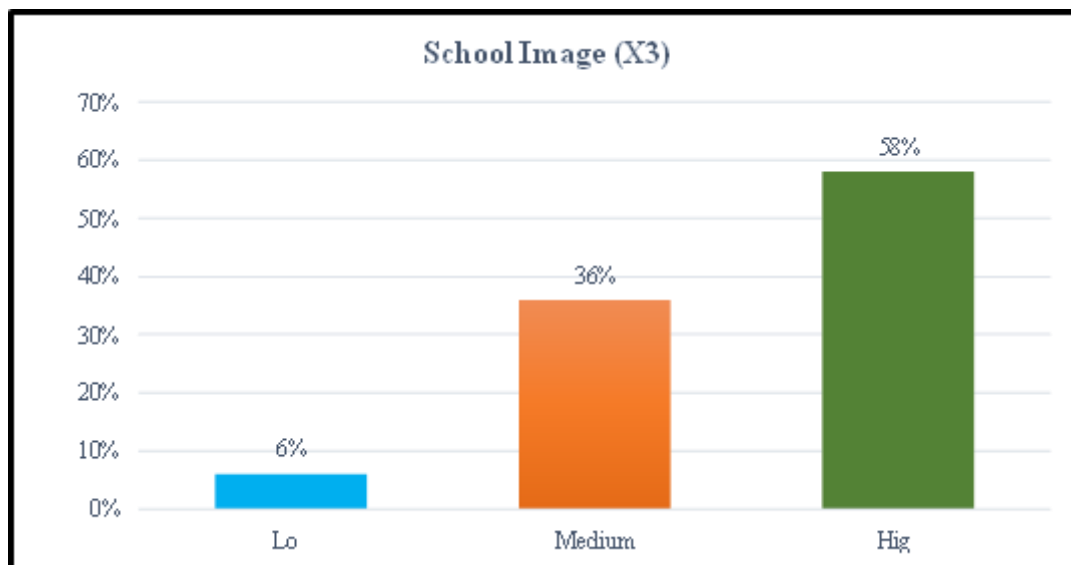


Fig.3. Frequency Diagram of School Image (X3)

Based on Fig.3, it can be seen that out of 100 mothers who live in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara, and have children of kindergarten school age, there are six mothers (6%) who think that the school image is low, 36 mothers (36%) think that the school image is moderate, and 58 mothers (58%) think that the school image is high.

d. School Service Quality (X4)

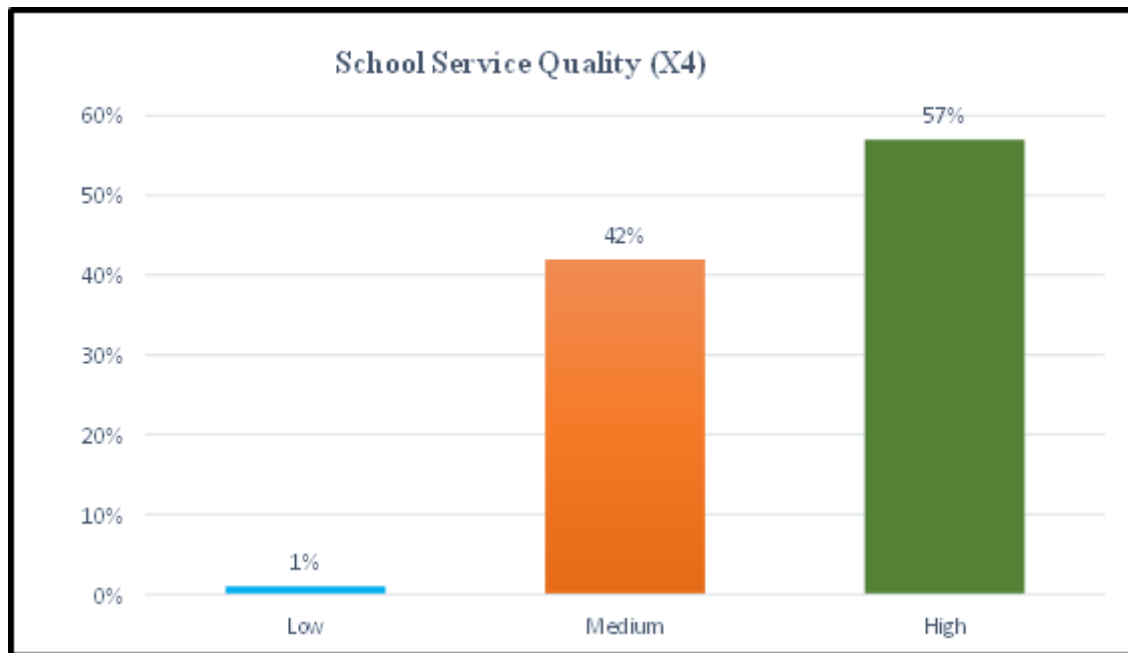


Fig.4. Frequency Diagram of School Service Quality (X4)

From Fig.4, it is known that out of 100 mothers who live in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara, and have children of kindergarten school age, there is one mother (1%) who stated that the quality of school services is low, 42 mothers (42%) stated that the quality of school services was moderate, and 57 mothers (57%) stated that the quality of school services was high.

e. School Location (X5)

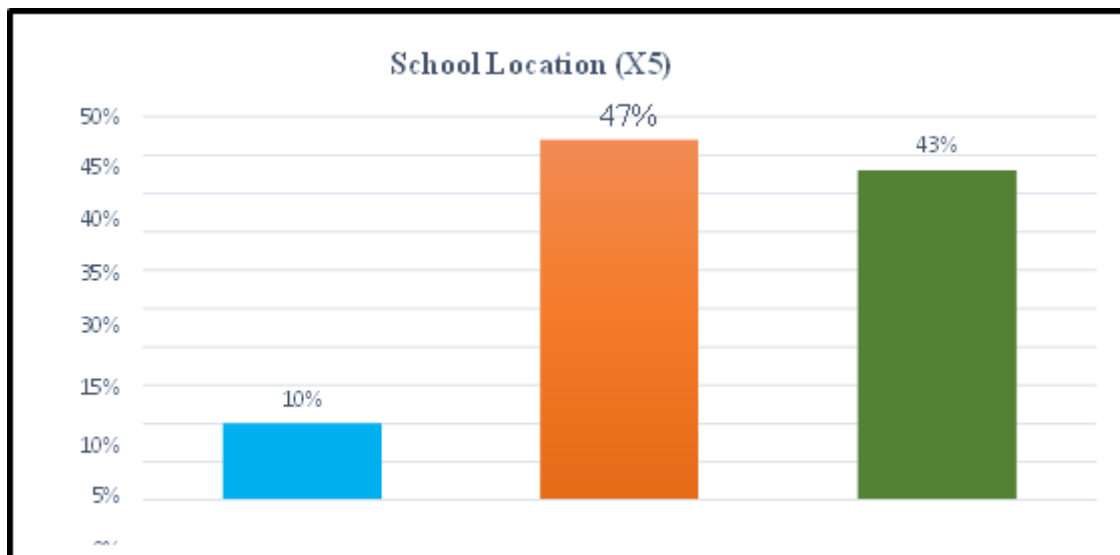


Fig.5. Frequency Diagram of School Location (X5)

From Fig.5, it is known that out of 100 mothers who live in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara, and have children of kindergarten school age, there are 10 mothers (10%) who stated that the school location is poor, 47 mothers (47%) stated that the school location was moderate, and 43 mothers (43%) stated that the school location was good.

f. School Fees (X6)

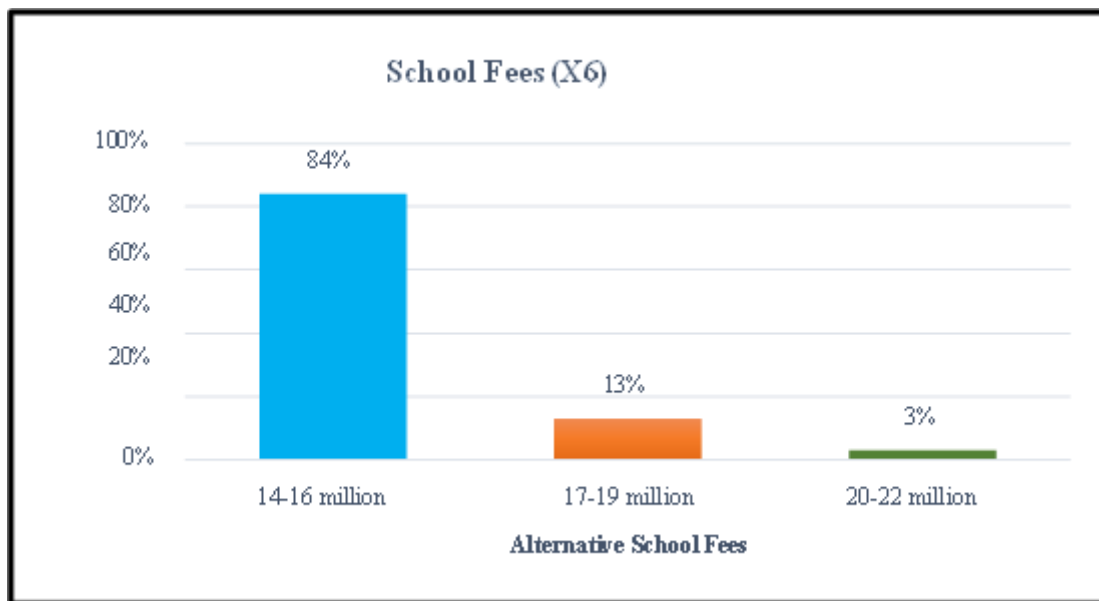


Fig.6. Frequency Diagram of School Fees (X6)

From Fig.6, it is known that out of 100 mothers who live in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara, and have children of kindergarten school age, 84 mothers (84%) prefer school fees of 14-16 million in one year, 13 mothers (13%) prefer school fees of 17-19 million in one year, and three mothers (3%) prefer school fees of 20-22 million in one year.

g. Parents' Preferences in Choosing an Integrated Islamic Education Institution (Y)

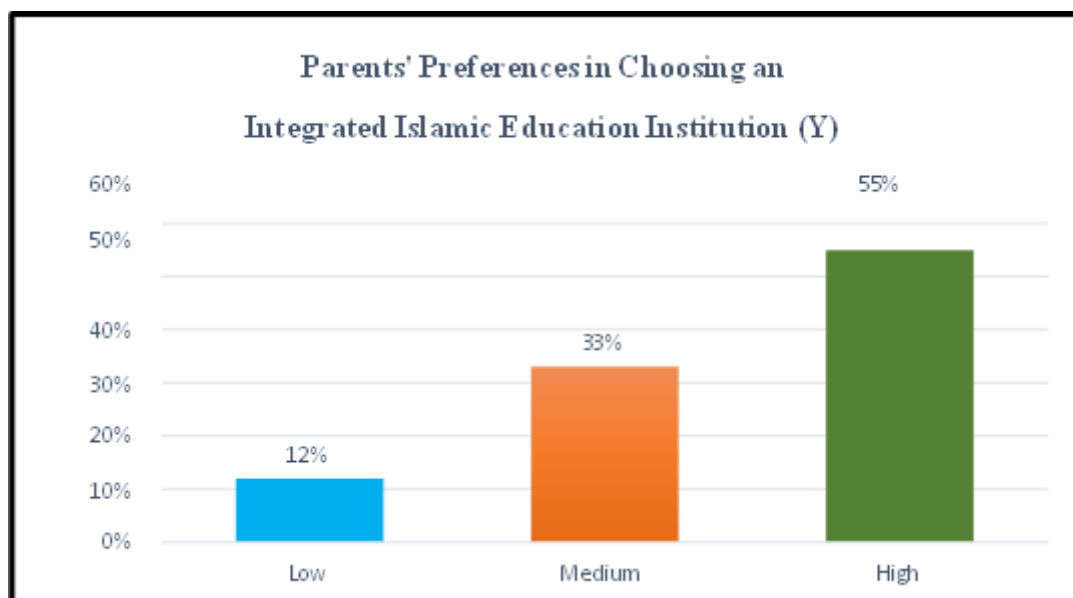


Fig.7. Frequency Diagram of Parents' Preferences in Choosing an Integrated Islamic Education Institution (Y)

As shown in Fig.7, it is known that out of 100 mothers who live in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara, and have children of kindergarten school age, 12 mothers (12%) state that parents' preferences in choosing integrated Islamic educational institutions (Y) are low, 33 mothers (33%) state that parents' preferences in choosing integrated Islamic educational institutions (Y) are moderate, and 55 mothers (55%) state that parents' preferences in choosing integrated Islamic educational institutions (Y) are high.

3.1. Factor Analysis of the Most Dominant Attributes in Influencing Parents' Preferences in Choosing an Integrated Islamic Educational Institution.

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis show that the most dominant factor influencing parents' preferences in choosing an integrated Islamic education institution is the quality of teachers in the integrated Islamic school. This is because the quality of teachers is one of the factors that affects the quality of education [26]. In addition, teachers will act as second parents at school, which builds students' motivation to learn. If the teacher has good quality in teaching, the students who are given the teaching will also be better in quality because the teacher is able to provide an understanding of the transfer of knowledge from the teacher to the students in an interesting and fun way. Qualified teachers are able to have creative and innovative ideas for the development and progress of students' intelligence [27].

This result is in accordance with Fauyan, who states that the quality factor of teachers affects parents' preferences in having an integrated Islamic school [28]. Quality supervision can affect the level of teacher confidence in teaching by either increasing or decreasing it [29]. Therefore, for teachers to work effectively, they need to have sufficient knowledge, ability to communicate and interact well, and technical skills in managing learning. Similar results were also expressed by Agustin in their research, where professional educators were one of the important indicators of parents in choosing integrated Islamic schools [3]. Teachers are a key element of the education system, especially in junior high schools. The importance of the role of teachers in the teaching and learning process at school should make parents pay more attention and consider in choosing a school, because teachers are one of the most important things that parents of students and from schools need to pay attention to, because from teachers, students see, receive, and imitate lessons about the value of worship, honesty, respect, and harmony given by the teacher and the attitude carried out by the teacher [30].

The next most dominant factor was the school location. School location can influence parents' preferences in choosing integrated Islamic educational institutions in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara. This can be interpreted as meaning that the location of the school is also one of the priorities in choosing an integrated Islamic school for parents. The strategic location of the school, with the school's distance from home not too far, the available transportation facilities are easily obtained and widely available, and the environmental conditions around the school are safe and comfortable to be the preference of parents preferring their children to be sent to integrated Islamic schools compared to other public or private schools [31].

These results support the results of research from Nabil, where school location is one of the factors in parents' preferences for choosing integrated Islamic schools [32]. Schools that have excellent transportation accessibility and are easy to reach are located in strategic city centers and are close to green open spaces that are able to provide offers for parents to send their children to integrated Islamic schools.

The results of this study are similar to those of previous research by Thoyyibah, where school location is one of the factors that parents consider when choosing an integrated Islamic school [33]. The distance from residence to school is related to the length of time students take to get to school and how much money, time, and energy they spend traveling to school, thus affecting their learning achievement. The location of the school, which includes distance and transportation facilities, is a consideration when choosing a school, and a safe and comfortable school is also a consideration for parents when sending their children to an Integrated Islamic School.

Prastika also supports the results of this study, where school location is also a rational consideration for parents when choosing an integrated Islamic school [34]. Parents choose to send their children to school based on the location of the school from home. Location and transportation are factors parents consider when choosing a school. Location is the place where a school is located, while transportation is the tool or vehicle used to reach the school. Parents consider the distance to be traveled to school, both from home and the parents' workplace.

3.2. Analysis of the Contribution of Attribute Factors to Parents' Preferences in Choosing an Integrated Islamic Educational Institution

The results of the analysis also found that the six factors in this study (school quality, teacher quality, school image, school service quality, school location, and school fees) contributed to the influence of parents' preferences in choosing integrated Islamic schools by 76.8%, while the remaining 23.2% were influenced by other factors outside this research. Although the four other factors (school quality, school image, school service quality, and school fees) did not influence parents' preferences in choosing integrated Islamic schools, overall or together they were able to provide an influence of 76.8% along with the quality of teachers and school location factors.

In addition to the results of research by Rizki, school location, education quality, service quality, and school accreditation are factors that parents consider when choosing a school [35]. Rusadi argues that instrumental rationality is the hope of becoming a pious and *sholehah* child and having good character in accordance with Islamic teachings; that is, the curriculum provided includes religious sciences that are not given in other public schools such as *fiqh*, *hadith*, *aqidah*, Islamic *tarikh*, Arabic language, *tajweed*, and so on; affective action, namely seeing that children need to get attention and affection from schools as given by parents and families, and traditional action, namely an Islamic environment and the majority of families studying in religious-based schools [36], [37], [38], [39].

4. Conclusion

This study aims to analyze parents' preferences in choosing an Integrated Islamic Education Institution in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara, using the conjoint analysis method. The main results show that, of the six attributes analyzed, teacher quality is the most dominant factor influencing parents' decisions, followed by school location. Regression and conjoint analyses consistently indicated that these two factors significantly influenced parents' preferences, while the other attributes (school quality, school image, service quality, and tuition fees) showed no statistically significant influence.

Overall, the six attributes in this model contributed 76.8% to the variation in parents' preferences in choosing integrated Islamic schools, while the remaining 23.2% were influenced by other factors not included in this study. The findings emphasize the importance of improving teachers' competence and professionalism as well as considering the accessibility of the school location as a strategy for attracting public trust in integrated Islamic education institutions. Theoretically, this study strengthens the literature on value-based education selection behavior and human resource quality. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a basis for strategic considerations for managers of educational institutions when designing policies to improve teacher quality and school location selection.

However, this study has limitations in the scope of the attributes studied, as well as data collection, which is cross-time and does not cover the entire socioeconomic context of parents as a whole. Therefore, further research is recommended to explore other factors such as the influence of media, social relations, and cultural factors that may have shaped these preferences. Additionally, a longitudinal approach can be used to track changes in preferences over time. Thus, this study not only contributes to the development of consumer behavior theory in the context of Islamic education but also has broader implications for improving the quality and competitiveness of Islamic education institutions amid the increasingly complex dynamics of society.

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