

ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS' PREFERENCE FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The growing public interest in private schools indicates a shift in parents' preferences when it comes to choosing an education for their children. This study aims to examine and synthesise the various factors influencing parents' preferences in choosing private schools and to categorise these factors into relevant main categories. This study employs a literature review method using a descriptive qualitative approach. Data sources were obtained through a documentary study of 10 scientific articles published in the last five years. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques, involving the organisation, grouping, synthesis, and drawing of conclusions. The results indicate that parents' preferences in choosing private schools are influenced by several key factors, namely educational quality, facilities and infrastructure, the school's image and reputation, tuition fees, location and accessibility, as well as social factors and religious values. These findings also indicate that parents' decisions are multidimensional and are not based solely on rational considerations, but also on values, experiences, and hopes for their children's future. The contribution of this research lies in presenting a comprehensive synthesis of the factors influencing parents' preferences when choosing private schools, thereby providing a basis for policymakers and education administrators in designing strategies to improve the quality of educational services that are better aligned with community needs.

Keywords: Parents' Preferences, Private Schools

1. INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions currently face significant challenges in retaining and increasing student enrollment. Increasing competition between public and private schools, coupled with the rise of homeschooling and online learning platforms, has led many schools to experience a decline in student enrollment. (Syafi'i et al., 2025). In recent years, the growing public interest in private schools has become a concern in the Indonesian education sector. Data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2023) shows that the number of private secondary schools in Indonesia increased by 8.4% over the past five years, while the number of students enrolled in public schools decreased by around 4.1% over the same period. This data demonstrates a shift in public preferences in choosing educational institutions for their children (Rovi et al., 2025).

In the educational process, parents have an important role as the party closest to the child and as the main decision maker in determining the choice of school. Jusman, (2025) research states that parents are the ones who determine which educational institution they believe is

capable of providing the best quality for their children. This decision is related to parents' perceptions of the quality of educational services. Parents' perceptions in choosing a school are influenced by various considerations, such as teaching quality, educational facilities, the learning environment, and the values expected to shape their children's academic development and character.

These changes in parental preferences are an important issue to examine because they can impact the sustainability of public schools. When private schools are perceived as better able to meet parental expectations in terms of educational quality, facilities, and services, public trust in public schools has the potential to decline. This situation, in the long term, could lead to a reduction in the number of students attending public schools. Perception of educational quality is an individual's ability to assess the excellence of an educational service, encompassing aspects of input, process, output, and impact. Therefore, parental preferences in choosing a school are influenced by various factors (Haerani et al., 2025).

Some of these studies have focused more on examining the factors that influence parents' decisions in choosing schools, but most of them are still conducted through an empirical approach with research objects limited to certain regions or educational institutions. Therefore, this study offers innovation by conducting a comprehensive literature synthesis to identify and group the main factors that influence parents' preferences in choosing private schools. This study aims to review and synthesize various literature related to the factors that influence parents' preferences in choosing private schools, as well as grouping these factors into relevant main categories.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach with a literature review method, a method that utilizes various data and previous research findings for systematic and comprehensive analysis. The aim was to obtain a clear picture of existing findings, thus providing a basis for understanding the factors influencing parents' preferences in choosing private schools. In its implementation, the data collection technique is through documentation studies, namely by collecting scientific articles that are relevant to the research topic (Asyari, 2021). Next, data analysis is carried out through a content analysis process which includes activities of organizing data, grouping it into certain units, synthesizing, compiling patterns, and drawing conclusions from various findings.

3. RESULTS

Based on the results of the research analysis, it was found that 6 journals were qualitative research, 3 journals were quantitative research, and 1 journal was a mixed method. The first qualitative research by Hikmah & Handoko, (2025) showed four main dimensions that influence parents' preference decisions, namely institutional factors and school image as dominant determinants, location and accessibility aspects as well as educational facilities, socioeconomic factors that form preference stratification, as well as the quality of educational services and the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies.

The second study by Oktavia et al., (2025) showed that factors influencing parents' decisions in choosing a school include effective school promotion, positive experiences from the surrounding community, teacher professionalism, affordable education costs, and a conducive

school environment. The next qualitative study adopted a literature review approach by Perwita & Widuri, (2022) showed that parents' preferences include aspects of academic achievement, institutional infrastructure, teacher competence, institutional performance, the number of alumni who successfully entered leading universities, the disciplinary system implemented by the institution, strategic location that is easily accessible by public transportation, the completeness of the institution's infrastructure, the presence of family members who have studied there, spiritual values internalized by the institution, the cost of education at the institution, and private institutions with Islamic nuances pay close attention to ideological motivation, educational motivation, structuralist motivation, economic motivation, and pragmatic motivation.

Further qualitative research using the literature review study method by Restarie, (2025) menunjukan bahwa minat orang tua dalam memilih sekolah dasar swasta didasarkan showed that parents' interest in choosing private elementary schools was based on various factors, both subjective (such as recommendations and image) and objective (such as facilities and costs). Further qualitative research using the comparative descriptive method was conducted by Islami et al., (2024) showed that there were differences in curriculum, teaching strategies, assessment systems, and teacher quality and qualifications between the two types of schools, where public schools tended to apply an interactive and student-centered learning approach, while private schools were more prominent in the use of modern technology, more complete facilities, and higher teacher qualifications.

The latest qualitative research using the literature review method by Zakiati et al., (2025) shows that school reputation influences parents' decisions which are formed by teacher quality, learning quality, school services, security, discipline, facilities, and superior programs, and is strengthened by factors of service quality, curriculum, word of mouth, and social media.

Furthermore, quantitative research using survey methods by Djazilan & Darmawan, (2023) showed that, partially and simultaneously, teacher quality, service quality, learning facilities, and the social environment have a significant influence on parents' decisions to choose private schools. These factors were proven to contribute 67.4% to parents' decisions, so it can be concluded that parents' preferences in choosing private schools are influenced by the internal quality of the school and the surrounding social environment. Another quantitative study using descriptive and causal comparative methods by Septinawati & Usman, (2025) showed that educational quality, value alignment, and cost are the main factors; private schools are chosen because of their quality and integration of religious values, while public schools are chosen because of more affordable costs and easier access. The latest descriptive quantitative study by Thoyyibah et al., (2022) showed that cost is not the most important factor for parents in choosing a school, while location, quality, service, and accreditation greatly influence their decisions.

The latest research using mixed-method research by Santosa & Aida, (2022) showed that school fees are the most dominant factor. Next, school achievement is assessed through students' academic and non-academic achievements. Curriculum and religious foundations are also considered to demonstrate the balance between general education and religious values. Furthermore, the quality of teaching staff is a consideration because it directly impacts the learning process. School marketing and promotion also play a role, helping parents obtain information and understand the school's strengths. Finally, the school's location, facilities, and infrastructure are supporting factors.

4. DISCUSSION

Based on an analysis of ten recent studies published within the last five years, this review synthesizes the primary factors influencing parental preferences in selecting private schools. The findings indicate that parental decision-making is shaped by a combination of interrelated factors, including educational quality, facilities and infrastructure, school image and reputation, education costs, as well as location, accessibility, and socio-religious values.

Educational quality emerges as a fundamental factor in shaping parental preferences. It refers to the overall standard of educational delivery in achieving predetermined learning outcomes, encompassing inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes. Previous studies highlight that educational quality reflects the effectiveness and efficiency of institutional management in fostering both academic and extracurricular excellence among students. One key indicator of educational quality is student achievement, which includes academic performance, success rates, and progression to higher levels of education. Such achievements are often perceived by parents as tangible evidence of a school's effectiveness in producing competitive graduates. In addition, curriculum design and character development play a crucial role, as a structured curriculum provides clear direction for learning, while character education supports students' socio-emotional growth and confidence. These aspects collectively influence parental perceptions of a school's ability to provide holistic education.

Furthermore, school performance and discipline are closely associated with educational quality. A conducive learning environment contributes to improved academic outcomes, while discipline reflects the consistency and effectiveness of school governance in shaping students' behavior. Equally important is the quality of teachers or instructors, as professional educators directly influence the learning environment through classroom management, student guidance, and continuous development. Consequently, teacher competence becomes a critical consideration for parents when selecting a school.

Facilities and infrastructure also play a significant role in influencing parental choices. The availability of adequate and modern facilities enhances parents' confidence in a school's ability to provide optimal educational services. Comprehensive educational support, including guidance and counseling, talent development programs, and character-building activities, further strengthens this perception. In addition, a safe, comfortable, and accessible learning environment contributes to higher levels of parental satisfaction and trust.

Another important factor is school image and reputation, which encompasses public perception, academic excellence, institutional achievements, and overall brand identity. Schools with strong reputations and consistent performance records tend to attract greater parental interest. Accreditation status also serves as a formal indicator of quality, with highly accredited schools generally perceived as more credible, even though they are often associated with higher costs. School image is shaped by information, experiences, and interactions within the community, while reputation represents the accumulation of public perceptions over time regarding the institution's performance and quality.

Education costs represent a crucial and often decisive factor in parental decision-making, as they are directly linked to the family's financial capacity. Educational expenses include not only tuition fees but also additional costs that support the learning process. In certain cases, particularly among families with limited financial resources, cost considerations may outweigh other factors such as reputation or perceived quality. Parents tend to evaluate the balance

between the quality of education offered and their financial ability, making affordability an essential aspect of school selection.

Location and accessibility further influence parental preferences, as proximity to home or workplace is often associated with efficiency in terms of time, energy, and transportation costs. Schools located in easily accessible and well-connected areas are generally more attractive to parents. However, research indicates that location is not always the primary determinant, as some parents are willing to choose schools that are farther away if they offer better educational quality or align more closely with their expectations.

In addition to these factors, socio-religious values play a significant role in shaping parental decisions. Parents often rely on recommendations from family members, friends, and the community when selecting schools, as these sources are considered trustworthy. Religious values, in particular, are highly regarded, with schools that emphasize spiritual development and religious practices perceived as offering added value. The integration of religious activities into the school environment has been shown to contribute to character development and the formation of positive habits among students.

Based on this synthesis, several strategic implications can be identified for educational institutions, particularly public schools, in responding to the growing preference for private schools. Schools need to enhance the overall quality of education through continuous teacher development and the implementation of innovative, student-centered learning approaches. Strengthening school image and reputation through effective communication and the promotion of achievements is also essential in building parental trust. Additionally, improving facilities and educational services can create a more conducive and supportive learning environment. Finally, institutions must carefully balance educational costs with service quality to ensure affordability while maintaining competitiveness.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of various literature, it can be concluded that parental preference in choosing a private school is a complex and multidimensional decision-making process. This decision is not influenced by a single factor, but rather the result of the interaction of various interrelated factors. The main factors influencing parental preference include educational quality, facilities and infrastructure, the school's image and reputation, tuition costs, location, social factors, and religious values.

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