

Trends in Religious-Based School Selection: Analysis of Parental Motivation

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ABSTRACT

The rise in parents choosing religion-based schools, specifically Islamic schools, reflects a trend warranting further investigation to inform educational policy and school management. Understanding the motivations driving these choices is essential to align educational practices with parental expectations. This study utilized a quantitative survey approach, sampling 126 parents from various Islamic schools in (region or demographics). A 47-item questionnaire assessed intrinsic motivations (e.g., desire for religious knowledge, moral development, academic performance) and extrinsic motivations (e.g., school environment, curriculum, regulations). Findings reveal that the primary intrinsic motivation among parents is fostering noble morals in their children, while the leading extrinsic factor is the presence of well-defined school regulations. Additional factors, including the quality of religious instruction and alignment with the school's vision and mission, also significantly influence parental decisions. These results highlight critical motivational patterns among parents that shape their educational choices, suggesting that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are pivotal. Understanding these factors provides actionable insights for administrators and policymakers to adapt school offerings to meet parental expectations. This study contributes to the limited literature on motivations for choosing religion-based education, offering practical implications for Islamic school administration and policy formulation aimed at enhancing educational outcomes through alignment with family priorities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education has long been recognized as a foundational tool in cultivating values, identities, and worldviews, shaping individuals and their broader society. Religion-based schools occupy a unique space among the diverse educational models, offering a curriculum that intertwines academic subjects with the tenets and moral teachings of a specific faith. Such schools not only impart knowledge but also nurture a

strong religious and moral foundation, which is often seen as crucial by parents who prioritize faith-based values in their children's upbringing (Abidin & Murtadlo, 2020; Cross et al., 2018; Lodigiani, 2020; Sumadi et al., 2019; Suyatno et al., 2020). As a result, religion-based schools play a vital role in shaping not only students' academic competencies but also their ethical and spiritual development, fostering individuals who embody the values of their faith and contribute positively to society.

In recent years, Islamic schools, in particular, have seen an upsurge in enrollment, reflecting a growing desire among parents to ensure that their children are educated within an environment aligned with Islamic values. This trend underscores the importance of understanding the motivations behind parents' choices, as these decisions carry significant implications for educational policy, school management, and community cohesion. Notably, religion-based schools foster environments where students' moral and ethical development is prioritized alongside academic achievement, creating a holistic approach to education. Additionally, they offer a structured setting where religious teachings are integrated into daily routines, reinforcing a strong sense of cultural and religious identity. Understanding these motivations is crucial, as it allows policymakers and school administrators to tailor educational programs that not only meet academic standards but also respect and nurture the religious and cultural values of the families they serve.

Religious-based schools can take several forms, including those entirely dedicated to religious education, private schools with strong religious influences, or institutions managed by specific religious communities. The increasing demand for Islamic religious-based schools is a growing trend in many regions, particularly in Indonesia. Research shows that despite the availability of public school programs, many parents remain committed to sending their children to religious-based institutions, often prioritizing them over secular alternatives (Taqiudin, 2020).

Faith-based schools typically integrate religious teachings with general academic subjects, emphasizing intellectual and spiritual development. Students are often provided with a curriculum that includes religious studies, ethics, and practices that shape their moral compass. These schools also foster strong ties with religious communities, offering students a supportive environment where faith is integrated into daily activities, such as prayers and religious celebrations. However, the approach and intensity of religious instruction can vary widely, ranging from conservative to more liberal interpretations of the faith.

The increasing prevalence of Islamic religious-based schools raises essential questions about parental motivations in choosing such institutions. While many studies have explored the academic and social impacts of faith-based education, a gap exists in understanding why parents opt for these schools over public alternatives, particularly in Indonesia. Understanding these motivations is crucial as it helps educators and policymakers tailor programs that address academic and religious needs. Moreover, it is essential to examine whether these motivations are driven by concerns about moral values, educational quality, or social pressures, especially in light of increasing societal concerns over student behavior, moral decline, and safety.

The social context in Indonesia has contributed to the rising preference for Islamic religious schools. Incidents such as juvenile delinquency, student brawls, and drug-related issues have led to heightened concerns among parents about the safety and future of their children. Between July and September 2012, for example, 13 students were killed in school-related brawls. This alarming statistic reflects the broader fears parents have about their children's moral and social development in secular schools. As a result, many parents are willing to invest more time, money, and effort to enroll their children in Islamic religious-based schools or madrasas, hoping these institutions will provide both moral and academic excellence (Nugroho & Kristiawan, 2021; Pratama & Sugiarto, 2023; Rahman, 2023; Rosikin et al., 2023).

Parents often hope that sending their children to these schools will receive a well-rounded education, mastering both general subjects—such as mathematics, Indonesian, social studies, and natural sciences—and advanced religious knowledge. Many parents' key concerns are their children's moral development, particularly when respect for teachers and elders is seen as diminishing. Research has shown that a decline in student behavior, such as disrespect towards teachers, has become a significant issue in

Indonesia, further motivating parents to seek alternatives that instill more vital moral values (Mahmudah et al., 2022).

This research addresses a significant gap in the literature by investigating the motivations driving parents to select Islamic religious-based schools for their children. Utilizing Hamzah B. Uno's motivation theory, which classifies motivations into intrinsic factors—such as personal fulfillment and religious obligation—and extrinsic factors—such as school reputation and academic performance (Chase, 2001; Kilpatrick et al., 2005; Puspitarini & Hanif, 2019; Xu et al., 2021), this study aims to illuminate the key influences guiding parental choices in the context of faith-based education. Doing so contributes to a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, and religious factors shaping these decisions, offering essential insights for educators and policymakers involved in developing responsive educational programs.

This study is guided by several core research questions. First, it seeks to identify the primary intrinsic motivations that lead parents to choose Islamic religious-based schools. Additionally, it examines extrinsic factors, such as school reputation and academic outcomes, that may influence these choices. Finally, the research explores how these motivations vary according to demographic variables, including socioeconomic status, educational background, and religious commitment. Through these inquiries, the study intends to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors impacting school choice. The findings will offer valuable insights into the motivations driving parents' decisions, ultimately informing educational practices and enhancing policy development in religious-based schools.

2. METHODS

This research describes parents' motivations in choosing Islamic religious-based schools for their children. A quantitative survey method was employed, as it is well-suited for gathering measurable data from a large sample, allowing for statistical analysis of the trends and factors influencing parental decisions. This method supports the objective of identifying both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations within a structured framework.

The study involved 126 parents who had enrolled their children in Islamic religious-based schools. The selection criteria for the participants included parents of children currently attending such schools, and the sample was drawn from diverse demographic backgrounds to ensure a broad representation of the population. Relevant demographic information such as age, educational background, and socioeconomic status was collected to examine potential correlations between these factors and the parents' motivations.

A 47-item questionnaire was designed to assess parents' motivations, covering both intrinsic and extrinsic factors based on Uno's motivation theory (Uno, 2023). The questionnaire was adapted from existing instruments used in similar studies, with adjustments made to align with the specific context of Islamic religious-based schools. The items were validated through a pilot test with a smaller sample of parents to ensure clarity and relevance. Feedback from the pilot was incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale (ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") to capture the degree to which parents agreed with each statement. A 4-point scale was chosen to avoid neutral responses, compelling respondents to express a definitive position on each item. The questionnaire was distributed digitally via Google Forms, selected for its accessibility and ease of use, enabling respondents to participate at their convenience.

The questionnaire grid used in this research, outlining the categories of motivation measured, is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Grid of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation Instruments

No	Source of motivation	Indicator
1	Intrinsic	Understanding religious knowledge Understanding the AlQuran Understand the science of jurisprudence Have noble morals achievement
2	Extrinsic	School environment Infrastructure Vision and mission Quality of religious education Educator profile Curriculum Activities at school Rule Extracurricular Cost Family environment Social environment

The data collection process was conducted over two weeks. Participants were sent a link to the questionnaire through school channels and parent-teacher associations. To encourage a high response rate, reminders were sent periodically, and participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Ethical considerations were paramount; informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were used to summarize the general trends in parents' motivations. The analysis focused on identifying the predominant intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and examining how these motivations vary among different subsets of parents. By utilizing this robust data analysis approach, the study aims to provide actionable insights into the motivations behind school choice, offering valuable information for educators, policymakers, and school administrators.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

The research results provide valuable insights into the motivations behind parents' decisions to send their children to religious-based schools, particularly Islamic schools. These motivations are categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivations refer to personal reasons linked to religious beliefs, values, and the desire for children's spiritual development. Extrinsic motivations include external influences such as religious-based schools' perceived safety, discipline, and reputation.

Table 2 presents the average scores for intrinsic motivations, encompassing personal reasons related to values, beliefs, and the desire for their children to grow in their faith. The highest-scoring intrinsic motivations included parents' preference for a solid moral foundation and Islamic values embedded in their children's education. Parents also highlighted the importance of a religious environment in nurturing their children's spiritual development.

Parental motivations for choosing religious-based schools can be broadly categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic factors, each significantly impacting the decision-making process. Intrinsic motivations reflect a desire to instill religious knowledge and values within children, while extrinsic motivations often relate to factors outside the immediate educational environment but are perceived as essential to a child's overall development and safety. Understanding these motivations requires examining both

sets of influences closely to capture the comprehensive picture of why parents may prefer religious-based schools over secular alternatives. Intrinsic motivations, as outlined in Table 2, include parents' desires for their children to deepen their understanding of religious teachings, develop noble morals, and achieve academically. These intrinsic factors underscore a commitment to nurturing both the spiritual and ethical dimensions of education.

Table 2. Intrinsic motivation

No	Indicator	Score average
1	Understanding religious knowledge	3,76
2	Understanding AlQuran	3,83
3	Understand the science of jurisprudence	3,87
4	Have noble morals	3,93
5	Achievement	3,50

Table 3 outlines the extrinsic motivations and external factors influencing parents' decisions. These include the perceived reputation of religious schools, concerns about safety in non-religious schools, and societal expectations. One of the most prominent extrinsic motivators was the belief that religious-based schools offer a safer and more disciplined environment compared to secular schools. Additionally, many parents reported that recommendations from community members and the schools' standing within local religious communities played a crucial role in their decision-making.

Table 3. Extrinsic motivation

No	Indicator	Score average
1	School environment	2,3
2	Infrastructure	2,95
3	Vision and mission	3,7
4	Quality of religious education	3,75
5	Educator profile	3,65
6	Curriculum	3,4
7	Activities at school	3
8	rule	3,8
9	Extracurricular	3,2
10	Cost	1,8
11	Family environment	2,55
12	Social environment	1,45

The extrinsic motivations identified provide valuable insights into how external factors contribute to parents' choice of religious-based schools. While intrinsic motivations center on personal and religious aspirations, extrinsic factors reflect broader societal influences and pragmatic concerns, such as cost, school facilities, and community perceptions. Together, these motivations suggest that parents seek a balanced educational experience that integrates religious instruction with a safe and supportive learning environment, highlighting the importance of these factors for school administrators and policymakers aiming to meet the needs of faith-based school communities.

3.2 Discussion

Parents' motivations for sending their children to religious-based schools, particularly Islamic institutions, are varied and multifaceted. These motivations can be categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic factors, with the ultimate goal being to shape children's moral character, equip them with

religious knowledge, and ensure their overall development in alignment with Islamic principles. Parents choose religious-based schools primarily to instill Islamic teachings and norms that align with Shari'a law and are applicable in everyday life. The comprehensive nature of Islamic education, which encompasses various elements such as vision, mission, institutions, curriculum, and teaching methodologies, ensures that these values are deeply ingrained in students. For many parents, this focus on Islamic values is a critical motivator.

Parents are motivated to send their children to religious-based schools, which can be described as a) Intrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation is a motive that becomes active or functions without needing to be stimulated from outside because, within each individual, there is already an urge to do something (Sardiman, 2016). Judging from intrinsic factors, the motivation of parents who send their children to Islamic-based schools is to have religious knowledge that is based on Islamic law. Every parent wants their child to become the next generation who is faithful, devout, intellectual, and has excellent and correct morals. Therefore, parents choose Islamic-based schools so that their children understand the teachings of the religion so that children can apply them according to what is prescribed. The intrinsic motivation of parents is shown clearly in Figure 1.

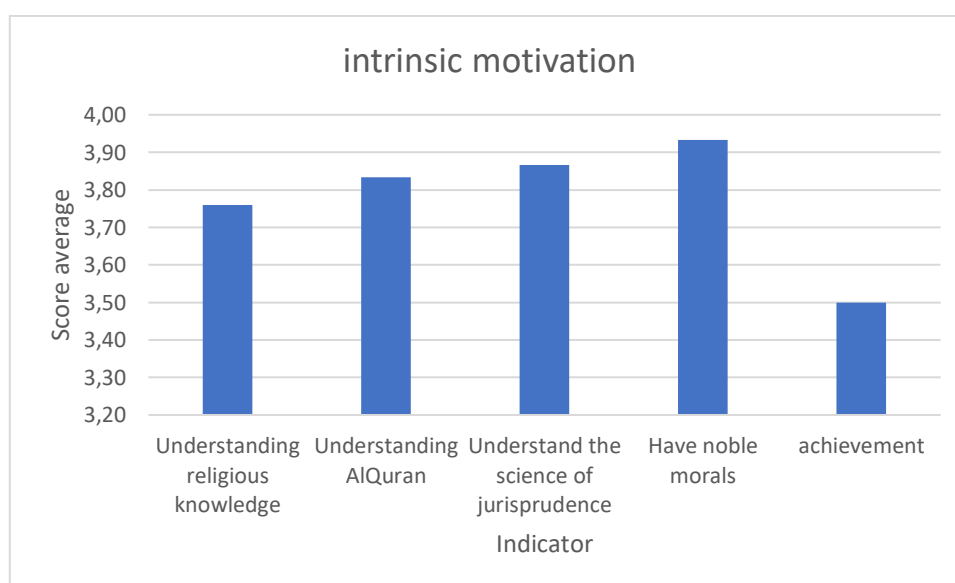


Figure 1. Parents' intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation refers to internal drivers that compel individuals to act without external incentives. In the context of Islamic education, many parents are motivated by the desire for their children to acquire a deep understanding of Islamic principles, adhere to the moral guidelines of their faith, and grow into individuals with excellent ethical character. These intrinsic motivations are deeply rooted in parents' values and beliefs regarding the importance of religious education.

Religious Knowledge and Understanding

One of the parents' most significant intrinsic motivations is their wish for their children to gain comprehensive religious knowledge. This motivation stems from the belief that education grounded in Islamic teachings will help their children understand the Qur'an, jurisprudence, and other critical aspects of the religion. By sending their children to Islamic-based schools, parents hope to ensure that their offspring learn and apply the principles of faith in their daily lives, fulfilling both the spiritual and practical aspects of their upbringing. This aligns with Sardiman's (2016) theory of intrinsic motivation, where individuals are driven to act based on internal desires without external prodding.

Parents perceive religious education as safeguarding their children's moral and ethical development. Islamic education fosters a disciplined approach to life, encouraging children to

internalize values like humility, honesty, and kindness. This emphasis on the development of noble morals is echoed in the findings of Manan (2017), who highlighted the role of the environment in shaping moral character. According to Hakim (2018), children benefit from a well-rounded education that spans formal, informal, and non-formal institutions, making it vital for parents to ensure their children's participation in Islamic schools that offer this holistic experience.

3.2.1 Parental Role in Moral Development

Parents play a crucial role in reinforcing their children's religious education. This involves modeling moral behavior, instilling values of monotheism, and avoiding extremes in discipline, either too strict or overly permissive. Children learn best when provided with consistent examples at home and in school. Abdul and Rostitawati (2020) noted that moral education is a collaborative effort involving family, school, and community environments. This interconnected approach bolsters the intrinsic motivation of parents to send their children to schools that reinforce moral lessons in every aspect of the child's life.

Parents are also motivated by the belief that Islamic schools will provide a structured environment where their children can practice good morals daily. This is especially important as children are highly influenced by their surroundings, and being in an environment where Islamic values are practiced both inside and outside the classroom helps reinforce their development into morally upright individuals. Parental motivation is further supported by a desire for their children to avoid negative influences in secular schools and to grow up with a clear understanding of right and wrong according to Islamic teachings.

3.2.2 Religious Knowledge and Academic Achievement

In addition to the desire for moral development, many parents are motivated by the belief that Islamic-based schools will provide their children with the academic foundation necessary for success. While academic achievement may not always be the primary focus of religious education, it remains a significant factor for some parents. Pratiwi (2018) demonstrated a positive relationship between parental support and student achievement, suggesting that the structure and discipline of religious schools can lead to improved academic outcomes. Even though parents understand that they may not be able to control their children's education successfully, they believe that an Islamic-based school environment will support their children's spiritual and intellectual growth.

Apart from intrinsic motivation, there is also extrinsic motivation for parents to send their children to religious-based schools. The complete results of the average extrinsic motivation questionnaire score are shown in Figure 2.

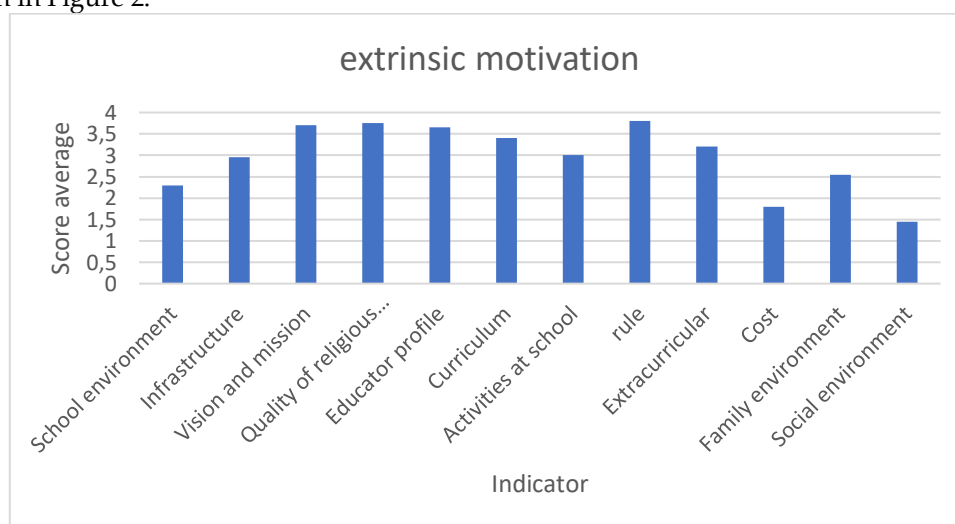


Figure 2. Extrinsic motivation

In addition to intrinsic motivations, several extrinsic factors influence parents' decisions to send their children to Islamic-based schools. Extrinsic motivation is driven by external factors such as school rules, curriculum quality, and teacher profiles. These elements contribute to parents' belief that religious schools offer a well-rounded education that aligns with spiritual and academic values.

3.2.3 Clear and Firm School Rules

One of the primary extrinsic motivations parents identify is the presence of clear and firm rules within religious-based schools. Parents believe these rules help shape their children's behavior, particularly regarding social interactions with peers. According to Garner (1996), affective variables such as emotional regulation and responsible behavior are crucial to developing healthy relationships in school-aged children. By providing a structured environment with well-defined boundaries, Islamic schools help students learn discipline and respect for authority, which is crucial for their moral and social development.

Parents often see religious schools as more effective at managing behavior and maintaining discipline than secular schools. The emphasis on moral and ethical behavior in and out of the classroom helps ensure that students grow into responsible individuals capable of making good decisions. This focus on discipline and character building is a significant factor in parents' decisions to choose Islamic-based schools.

3.2.4 Quality of Religious Education

Another important extrinsic motivation for parents is the quality of religious education offered by Islamic schools, which they regard as instrumental in shaping their children's character. Parents highly value religious instruction not only for the academic content it provides but also for its role in fostering ethical and moral growth. According to Nurlela and Purwanti (2020), Islamic education plays a crucial role in building good character among students, with teachers serving as pivotal figures in this developmental process. By choosing schools that prioritize religious education, parents aim to provide their children with a comprehensive education that encompasses both intellectual and moral dimensions.

This dual focus aligns with many parents' aspirations to raise well-rounded individuals who embody the values of their faith and contribute positively to society. Furthermore, Islamic schools often integrate character-building activities into their curriculum, creating an environment where students can practice ethical principles daily. For parents, this structured approach to moral and spiritual development offers assurance that their children are receiving an education that aligns with their religious and cultural values, while also preparing them for future challenges. In essence, parents view Islamic schools as institutions that not only educate but also instill lifelong values, reinforcing their commitment to holistic child development.

3.2.5 School Vision and Mission

The vision and mission of a school serve as crucial extrinsic motivators for parents selecting Islamic educational institutions. These guiding principles are perceived as indicators of the values, culture, and overall environment that their children will experience. When a school's vision and mission align closely with Islamic values, parents feel assured that their children will be immersed in an environment that supports both spiritual and academic development. Schools with strong, value-oriented missions often emphasize principles such as integrity, respect, and community service, aligning with parents' desires for holistic child development.

Research by Purwanto (2021) underscores the importance of visionary leadership in schools, noting that clear and focused school missions can enhance teacher performance and, consequently, improve the overall quality of education. For parents, this leadership not only fosters a disciplined and value-driven atmosphere but also ensures that their children are in a setting where academic rigor and religious principles coexist harmoniously. This assurance of a well-rounded educational approach

motivates parents to choose schools that commit to cultivating both intellectual competence and moral integrity. By opting for institutions with a robust, Islamic-centered vision, parents seek a nurturing environment that upholds excellence across religious and academic dimensions, ultimately supporting their aspirations for their children's comprehensive personal and spiritual growth.

3.2.6 Educator Profiles and Emotional Stability

The profile of educators in religious schools stands as a key extrinsic motivator for parents, who place a high value on the moral integrity, emotional stability, and overall character of those responsible for their children's education. Parents expect teachers to be knowledgeable in academic and religious subjects and to serve as ethical role models who embody the values they wish to instill in their children. This emphasis on character extends beyond expertise to include the teacher's demeanor and capacity for compassion, patience, and understanding in daily interactions with students.

Syarnubi (2019) highlights the importance of emotional stability in teachers, particularly when addressing challenging situations in the classroom. Emotionally stable teachers can manage conflicts calmly and create a positive, respectful environment that reassures parents of their children's well-being. For parents, the presence of educators who can handle classroom dynamics with empathy and poise is crucial, as it contributes to a safe and supportive learning space where students feel valued and secure. Additionally, teachers who demonstrate ethical consistency and emotional resilience reinforce the school's broader mission of character-building, thereby enhancing parents' trust in the school's ability to provide a nurturing and morally sound environment for their children. This trust in educators' character and conduct significantly impacts parental confidence, encouraging them to choose schools where such high standards are maintained.

3.2.7 Curriculum, Extracurricular Activities, and Infrastructure

The school's curriculum is another significant extrinsic factor. Parents want their children exposed to a curriculum that aligns with Islamic teachings and provides a solid academic foundation. Roziqin (2019) noted that superior schools emphasize the importance of curriculum planning in achieving educational excellence. Parents also consider extracurricular activities, facilities, and infrastructure when choosing a school. While these factors may not be as crucial as religious instruction, they still shape parents' decisions, as they want to ensure their children have access to a well-rounded education that supports personal and academic development.

The findings of this study align with Hamzah B. Uno's motivation theory, which highlights the interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic factors in educational choices. A combination of internal desires for moral and spiritual development and external considerations such as school rules, teacher quality, and curriculum drives parents' motivations for choosing religious-based schools for their children. This dual motivation reflects the holistic nature of Islamic education, which seeks to develop both the mind and the soul.

The most significant intrinsic motivation is the parents' desire for their children to have noble morals and a deep understanding of Islamic teachings. This motivation is supported by the structured environment provided by Islamic-based schools, which helps reinforce these values. The most significant extrinsic motivation is the clear and firm rules that govern behavior, which parents believe will help shape their children's social interactions and overall character.

In summary, parents' motivations for enrolling their children in Islamic-based schools are deeply rooted in a desire for comprehensive education that integrates religious, moral, and academic dimensions. This study reveals that both intrinsic factors, such as the desire to instill noble morals and Islamic knowledge, and extrinsic factors, like the quality of school rules, teacher profiles, and curricular offerings, play pivotal roles in parents' decision-making. By choosing schools that align with their faith, parents aim to create a nurturing environment that reinforces Islamic values through structured discipline, quality education, and moral guidance. The findings confirm Hamzah B. Uno's motivation theory, illustrating that parents are motivated by an intricate balance of intrinsic and extrinsic

influences, which work together to shape a well-rounded, faith-aligned educational experience for their children. These insights underline the importance of designing educational policies and practices that address these motivations, offering a blueprint for religious-based schools to meet the evolving needs and expectations of their communities. This alignment not only supports students' holistic growth but also strengthens the educational institution's role as a cornerstone of moral and academic excellence.

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that influence parents to enroll their children in Islamic-based schools. The primary intrinsic motivation was parents' desire to foster noble morals, faith, and adherence to Islamic principles in their children, which they believed would shape them into individuals of strong character and ethical grounding. Parents also placed high value on imparting spiritual knowledge, intending for it to guide their children's behavior and decision-making. Among extrinsic motivations, the presence of clear and firm school rules was the most influential factor, as parents appreciated the structure and discipline these schools provide, anticipating positive impacts on their children's social interactions and conduct. Additionally, the quality of religious education, the alignment of the school's vision and mission with Islamic values, and the reputation of the educators were significant considerations. These factors reassured parents that their children would receive a well-rounded education that supports both spiritual and academic growth. For Islamic schools to enhance their appeal, it is essential to continue emphasizing character-building, deliver high-quality religious education, and clearly communicate their mission to prospective parents. This study contributes to the broader understanding of factors influencing educational choices, highlighting that a balanced integration of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations plays a central role in parents' decisions to select religious-based schooling for their children.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest

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