

## The Preferences of Nirwana Village Families in Choosing Islamic Boarding Schools as Educational Institutions for Their Children

Tasurun Amma, Ani Maghfiroh, Purnomo

STAIDA Sumatera Selatan, Palembang, Indonesia

### ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the preferences of families in Nirwana Village in choosing Islamic boarding schools (Pondok Pesantren) as educational institutions for their children. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the study gathers data through interviews, observation, and documentation involving selected families and pesantren administrators. The findings reveal that religious values, discipline, character education, accessibility, cost, and the reputation of pesantren are the main factors influencing family choices. Families view pesantren not only as centers of religious knowledge but also as institutions that shape the moral and spiritual character of children. The study concludes that cultural and religious traditions in Nirwana Village play a significant role in sustaining the preference for pesantren education, and understanding these preferences can support educational policy planning and pesantren development.

**Keywords:** Families' Perception, Islamic Boarding School, Educational Institutions

#### Corresponding author

**Name:** Tasurun Amma

**Email:** [tasurunamma@staidasumsel.ac.id](mailto:tasurunamma@staidasumsel.ac.id)

### INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental aspect of human development and plays a critical role in shaping the character and knowledge of individuals. In Indonesia, *Pondok Pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) have long been respected institutions that offer not only formal education but also spiritual and moral guidance (Al Furqan 2015). These institutions provide a religiously immersed environment, fostering discipline, independence, and community-based living among students, known as *santri* (Fahham 2013). Especially in rural areas, such as Nirwana Village, pesantren continue to be a preferred choice due to their strong Islamic traditions and community trust.

Several studies have explored parental preferences in choosing educational institutions. Research by Al Baqi dan Firmansyah (2023) emphasized the influence of religious and cultural values in parents' choices toward pesantren. Similarly, (Syaiful 2020) identified factors such as pesantren reputation, teacher quality, and curriculum content. However, these studies largely focus on urban or general populations. There remains a gap in localized studies that examine the sociocultural and economic dynamics influencing rural

family preferences, particularly in distinct communities like Nirwana Village with unique religious and demographic profiles.

This research seeks to explore the preferences of families in Nirwana Village when selecting *Pondok Pesantren* as an educational institution for their children. The study specifically aims to answer: (1) How do families in Nirwana perceive pesantren as educational institutions? and (2) What are the main factors influencing their decision?

By focusing on a rural setting with strong religious traditions and socioeconomic diversity, this research offers fresh insights into community-based educational decision-making. It contributes to a deeper understanding of localized educational preferences, which can inform pesantren leaders, education policymakers, and stakeholders in crafting more responsive and inclusive educational strategies that align with community needs.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. The aim was to explore and describe the preferences of families in Desa Nirwana in selecting Islamic boarding schools (*Pondok Pesantren*) as educational institutions for their children. The research focused on uncovering perceptions, influencing factors, and expectations through direct engagement with community members.

The subjects of this study were families residing in Desa Nirwana, Kecamatan Semendawai Timur, Kabupaten Ogan Komering Ulu Timur, South Sumatra. The target population included families who had enrolled or planned to enroll their children in a *Pondok Pesantren*. The sample was selected purposively to represent a diverse range of social and economic backgrounds.

Data were collected using interviews, observations, and documentation techniques. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with selected parents to gather their perceptions and reasoning behind choosing Islamic boarding schools. Observations were carried out in the community and schools to understand the educational environment. Documentation involved reviewing relevant records and local demographic data to support the findings.

The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This approach allowed the researcher to systematically interpret the qualitative data and identify recurring themes and patterns that explain the families' preferences.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **RESEARCH RESULT**

#### **Perceptions of Nirwana Village Families Regarding Islamic Boarding Schools as Educational Institutions for Children**

Families in Nirwana Village hold a highly favorable perception of Islamic boarding schools *pesantren* as holistic educational institutions. These schools are not only viewed as centers for deepening religious knowledge but also as spaces for nurturing moral, spiritual, and character development in children. Parents believe that *pesantren* instill discipline,

devotion to worship, and proper manners—values that are increasingly seen as essential in the face of modern social challenges (Azra 2012). The religious foundation of *pesantren* is considered crucial in shielding children from negative influences such as peer pressure and the misuse of technology, particularly during adolescence—a formative and often vulnerable stage (Monib dan Bahrawi 2011).

Many Nirwana families see *pesantren* as a safe and structured environment where children are more focused on studying and easily guided in religious teachings. This makes *pesantren* a preferred alternative to public or secular schools, which are often perceived as lacking a comparable moral framework. Furthermore, *pesantren* life is credited with cultivating independence. Students are responsible for managing daily tasks like cleaning, organizing their schedules, and interacting with peers, thereby developing personal responsibility and resilience—skills often difficult to foster at home (Zaini 2024).

Beyond fostering discipline and independence, *pesantren* also promote spiritual growth and character formation. Students learn to recite the Qur'an, practice religious rituals, and internalize values such as humility, respect for teachers, and obedience to parents—core components of Islamic education (Al Baqi dan Firmansyah 2023). For many parents, these values outweigh mere academic achievements.

The influential role of the *Kyai* or *Ustadz*—respected religious educators—is another reason for high parental trust. Their charisma, wisdom, and dedication provide emotional assurance to parents, who regard these figures not only as teachers but as spiritual guardians during their children's formative years (Baso, Sunyoto, dan Mummaziq 2007). This trust is further strengthened by the *pesantren's* simple lifestyle and emphasis on community, which reflect the cultural values of Nirwana Village such as modesty, cooperation, and social solidarity.

Modern *pesantren* have also adapted to national educational standards by integrating general education with religious instruction. This curriculum duality ensures students can pursue higher education and broader career opportunities without compromising religious learning. Consequently, *pesantren* are no longer seen as institutions solely for the pious, but as inclusive educational spaces that prepare students for both worldly and spiritual success (Emilia 2022).

Many families affirm noticeable improvements in their children after attending *pesantren*. They report greater politeness, organizational skills, and emotional maturity—concrete indicators of the positive impact of *pesantren* education. Even initially hesitant parents often change their minds after witnessing these transformations in others' children (UNICEF Belgrade 2017).

The strong religious atmosphere of Nirwana Village, characterized by communal worship and regular religious events, reinforces the perception that *pesantren* is the ideal educational path. Local cultural and religious values synergize with *pesantren* teachings, creating a shared belief that the best education is rooted in Islamic values and practice.

In conclusion, *pesantren* are widely regarded by Nirwana Village families as comprehensive educational institutions that integrate faith, character, and academic

development. These perceptions make *pesantren* not only a place of learning but a trusted environment for shaping future generations.

### **Factors Influencing Nirwana Village Families in Choosing Pesantren for Their Children's Education**

Families in Nirwana Village hold a profoundly positive perception of Islamic boarding schools *pesantren* as comprehensive educational institutions. These schools are not merely viewed as centers for acquiring religious knowledge but as places where children's moral and spiritual character is holistically shaped. Parents believe *pesantren* instill discipline, religious devotion, and proper manners—values deemed essential in shielding children from contemporary moral challenges. This aligns with the findings of Azra 2012, who noted that *pesantren* serve as traditional yet adaptive institutions that preserve Islamic identity and social ethics in the face of modernization.

A major reason behind this preference is the belief that *pesantren* environments provide a safeguard against the negative impacts of excessive social interaction and digital media. The boarding system is perceived to foster focus, reduce distractions, and protect adolescents during their formative years. According to Anam dkk. (2019), the *pesantren* culture emphasizes *ta'dzim* (respect), obedience, and spiritual discipline, which are considered crucial during adolescence. In comparison to public schools, *pesantren* are seen as more effective in nurturing religious values and behavioral discipline.

Parents also recognize that *pesantren* help cultivate independence and resilience in students. Living away from home encourages them to manage personal routines—such as cleaning, scheduling study time, and building peer relationships—without constant parental assistance. This experience is considered invaluable for developing responsibility and maturity. Wicaksono, Arifin, dan Sumarsono (2024) argues that such self-management skills are among the implicit curricula of *pesantren* that contribute significantly to character building.

Moreover, *pesantren* are revered as places of spiritual cultivation, where students learn not only to read and memorize the Qur'an but also to embody values such as humility, respect toward teachers, and obedience to parents. These traits are considered more valuable than academic achievements alone. Parents emphasize that religious education is not only about knowledge but about embodying values in daily life—consistent with the character education model emphasized by Lickona (2004) (Izzati dkk. 2019), which includes moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.

Central to this trust is the role of *Kyai* or *Ustadz*, who are viewed as not only educators but also spiritual guardians. Their charisma, wisdom, and sincerity foster confidence among parents, who feel assured that their children are under the guidance of devout and knowledgeable leaders. This deep respect reflects the traditional authority structure within *pesantren* life as described by Erham As'ari dkk. (2024), where the *Kyai* holds a paternal and moral position in the learning process.

The *pesantren* lifestyle, characterized by simplicity and communal solidarity, also resonates with the values of Nirwana Village, which emphasize frugality and mutual

cooperation. Such traits, parents believe, will be internalized by children and benefit them throughout life. The pesantren model mirrors the village's cultural norms, making it a natural extension of the community's way of life (Khoiri dan Aryati 2021).

In recent years, many pesantren have integrated the national curriculum alongside religious studies, offering a balanced education that prepares students for both higher education and religious life. This integration is a key factor in maintaining pesantren's relevance and competitiveness, as noted by Zamakhsari Dhofier and later studies (e.g., Hasan, 2019), and reassures parents that their children are not academically disadvantaged.

Parents often report significant behavioral changes in their children after attending pesantren, citing improvements in discipline, politeness, and self-control. These changes are seen as tangible proof of the pesantren's effectiveness in character development, echoing observations in research by Nazib, Ainissyifa, dan Anisah (2021), which emphasizes the transformative role of pesantren in shaping ethical behavior.

The strong religious culture of Nirwana Village further reinforces the collective belief in pesantren as the ideal form of education. With numerous village-based religious activities and the prominent success of pesantren alumni in religious affairs, pesantren are seen as institutions that embody the community's highest aspirations for moral and spiritual success.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study highlight that pesantren are perceived by families in Nirwana Village as institutions that provide more than just religious education. Parents see them as holistic environments that promote the spiritual, moral, and emotional development of children. Pesantren are trusted to instill discipline, shape character, and nurture independence—qualities that many families consider essential in preparing children to face future challenges. This interpretation is especially important in the context of modern social dynamics, where parents worry about the negative influence of technology and peer pressure on their children.

In choosing pesantren, parents are driven by a combination of practical and ideological considerations. Religious motivation plays a central role, as pesantren are seen as spaces where children are protected from moral decline and guided toward a righteous path. However, the decision is also influenced by economic factors (such as lower tuition fees compared to private schools), accessibility, teacher reputation, and social recommendations. This multifaceted decision-making process shows that educational preference is not purely rational or economic but deeply embedded in cultural and spiritual beliefs.

Importantly, these findings reflect a strong alignment between parental aspirations and the pesantren's perceived role as moral and educational guardians. The belief that pesantren education results in children who are well-mannered, respectful, and religiously devout reinforces the parents' confidence in their choice. Therefore, the results are significant as they provide insight into how rural Muslim communities define

educational success—not only through academic achievement but also through religious commitment and good character.

The results of this study are consistent with previous research conducted by Al Baqi dan Firmansyah (2023), which emphasized that the religiosity and cultural values of parents significantly influence their preference for pesantren education in the digital era. Similarly, research by Syaiful (2020) found that parents often choose pesantren because of their holistic educational approach, combining formal academic content with deep religious and moral instruction. The findings of this study also support the conceptual framework proposed by Pakar (2020), which outlines how parental preferences in education are affected by a combination of social, psychological, and economic factors. These consistencies validate the conclusion that pesantren remain a culturally relevant and respected educational choice in rural Indonesia.

Despite the valuable insights gained, this study is not without limitations. First, the research was geographically limited to a single rural village—Desa Nirwana—making it difficult to generalize findings to other regions with different cultural or religious backgrounds. Second, the sample size was limited, and interviews focused primarily on parents, which may exclude perspectives from other relevant stakeholders such as teachers, *Kyai*, or the students themselves. Additionally, this study focused on qualitative data, and while rich in descriptive insights, it does not provide measurable statistical validation of the factors influencing parental choice. Future research using a mixed-method approach could help strengthen the validity and generalizability of the findings.

The study offers important implications for both educational institutions and policymakers. For pesantren administrators, understanding the core values and expectations of families—such as emphasis on religious instruction, discipline, and affordability—can help them design better educational programs and support services. For government and education planners, the findings highlight the need to integrate pesantren into broader educational frameworks by providing them with better facilities, training, and curriculum support. Furthermore, the results suggest the potential for future research to explore how pesantren graduates perform academically and socially compared to those from other educational pathways. A comparative study could help measure the long-term impact of pesantren education on personal development and social mobility.

## CONCLUSION

The perception of families in Nirwana Village regarding Islamic boarding schools (Pondok Pesantren) as educational institutions for their children reflects a very positive view. The community sees *Pondok Pesantren* not only as a place to study religious knowledge but also as an institution capable of shaping children's character, morals, and discipline. The religious environment and direct guidance from *Kyai* or *Ustadz* are considered effective in protecting children from the negative influences of modern development. This perception is strengthened by personal experiences and social recommendations, fostering the belief that *Pondok Pesantren* is the best choice for holistic education—spiritually, morally, and academically.

Several key factors influence the families in Nirwana Village in choosing *Pondok Pesantren* as an educational institution for their children. Strong religious values within the village community are a dominant factor. In addition, the quality of both religious and general education offered, the availability of facilities, discipline, affordable tuition fees, and influence from family, friends, and religious leaders all significantly impact the decision-making process. Other factors include geographical accessibility and positive experiences from family or relatives who have previously enrolled their children in *pesantren*. This combination of internal and external factors creates a strong tendency among Nirwana Village families to make *Pondok Pesantren* their primary choice for their children's education.

## REFERENCES

- Al Baqi, Sarifuddin, dan Defi Firmansyah. 2023. "Preferensi Terhadap Pendidikan Pesantren dari Perspektif Orang Tua dan Calon Santri di Era Digital." *Jurnal Arsyadana : Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Aktual* 2(2).
- Al Furqan. 2015. *Konsep Pendidikan Islam Pondok Pesantren dan Upaya Pembenaannya*. Padang: UNP Press.
- Anam, Saeful, I. Nyoman Sudana Degeng, Nurul Murtadho, dan Dedi Kuswandi. 2019. "The Moral Education and Internalization of Humanitarian Values in Pesantren: A Case Study from Indonesia." *Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists* 7(4):815–34. doi: 10.17478/jegys.629726.
- Azra, Azyumardi. 2012. *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi di tengah Tantangan Milenium III*. Jakarta: Prenada Media.
- Baso, Ahmad, K. Ng H. Agus Sunyoto, dan Rijal Mummaziq. 2007. *KH. HASYIM ASY'ARI Pengabdian Seorang Kyai untuk Negeri*. Surabaya: Hikmah Press.
- Emilia, Grace. 2022. "Spiritual Formation of Senior Adult Parishioners through the Holistic and Intergenerational Paradigm." *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan* 21(2):317–30. doi: 10.36421/veritas.v21i2.590.
- Erham As'ari, Ahmad Zainuri, Yuniar, dan Tasurun Amma. 2024. "The Implementation of Learning Curriculum of Traditional Islamic Boarding School Darul Huda in the Era of Society 5.0." *Jurnal Iqra': Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan* 9(2):353–71. doi: 10.25217/ji.v9i2.4353.
- Fahham, A. Muchaddam. 2013. "Character Education in Islamic Boarding School." *Aspirasi* 4(1):29–45.
- Izzati, Umi Anugerah, Bachtiar Syaiful Bachri, M. SahiD, dan Dian Eka IndriAni. 2019. "Character Education: Gender Differences in Moral Knowing, Moral Feeling, and Moral Action in Elementary Schools in Indonesia." *Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists* 7(3):547–56. doi: 10.17478/jegys.597765.
- Khoiri, Qolbi, dan Ani Aryati. 2021. "THE PROBLEMS OF PESANTREN EDUCATION IN IMPROVING HUMAN ACADEMIC QUALITY IN THE GLOBAL-MULTICULTURAL ERA." *Didaktika Religia* 9(1):165–86. doi: 10.30762/didaktika.v9i1.3274.

- Monib, Mohammad, dan Islah Bahrawi. 2011. *Islam & hak asasi manusia dalam pandangan Nurcholish Madjid*. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Nazib, Fiqra Muhamad, Hilda Ainissyifa, dan Ani Siti Anisah. 2021. "Improving Digital Competence Madrasah Teachers Through the Ministry of Religion's Digital Platform (SIPINTAR)." *ICIE: International Conference on Islamic Education* 1(1).
- Pakar, Sutejo Ibnu. 2020. *Pendidikan dan Pesantren*. Elsi Pro.
- Syaiful, Syaiful. 2020. "PREFERENSI ORANG TUA DALAM MEMILIH PONDOK PESANTREN SEBAGAI TEMPAT PENDIDIKAN BAGI ANAK." *Jurnal Konseling Pendidikan Islam* 1:118–28. doi: 10.32806/jkpi.v1i2.27.
- UNICEF Belgrade. 2017. *Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices in Relation to Immunization of Children In Serbia*. Serbia: Michel Saint Lot, UNICEF Representative in Serbia.
- Wicaksono, Wildan Agus, Imron Arifin, dan Raden Bambang Sumarsono. 2024. "Implementing a Pesantren-Based Curriculum and Learning Approach to Foster Students' Emotional Intelligence." *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 5(2):207–21. doi: 10.31538/munaddhomah.v5i2.1074.
- Zaini, Abdullah. 2024. "Peran Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Menghadapi Tantangan Global." *Samilaya: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Keagamaan Islam* 5(2):120–30.