



The Impact of School Programs, Teacher Quality, and Location on Parental Decision-Making in School Selection

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

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This study aims to analyze the influence of flagship programs, school location, and teacher quality on parents' decisions in choosing a school. A quantitative approach with a survey method was employed, using a population of 73 parents of students in grades 1 to 6. Total sampling was used, and data were analyzed through multiple linear regression with SPSS version 27. The results indicate that flagship programs, school location, and teacher quality each have a positive influence on parents' school selection decisions. These findings suggest that schools should continually evaluate and improve educational quality, particularly regarding flagship programs, student safety, and the overall learning environment.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's society, education plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of individuals and societies. A quality education is not only about acquiring knowledge but also developing social, emotional, and moral aspects of a child's life (Rafiyya et al., 2024). As children's foundational years are in primary education, the decision-making process for parents is crucial. They want a school that supports academic excellence, social development, and values. Given the rapid advancements in technology, shifting social values, and changing family dynamics, parents are becoming more selective in choosing schools that align with their aspirations for their children's future. Research shows that factors like flagship programs, school location, and teacher quality are critical to shaping parental decisions on school choice. This study is important because it highlights the specific components that influence parents' decision-making, helping educational institutions understand the drivers behind enrollment fluctuations (Srivastava & Dhamija, 2022).

This research uses several theories to understand the concepts of school selection and parental decision-making (Blake & Mestry, 2020). First, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) will be applied to understand how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence parents' decisions. The second relevant theory is the Consumer Decision-Making Theory (Leonov et

al., 2023), which explains how factors such as product or service attributes (in this case, school programs and teacher quality) affect consumer choice. Additionally, the Theory of Human Capital will guide the investigation into how educational institutions are perceived based on the perceived quality of teachers and programs. These theories provide a comprehensive framework to analyze how different educational factors influence parents' decisions in selecting the right school for their children (Venketsamy & Miller, 2021).

In recent years, the number of students enrolling in SD Swasta DRA Islamic School has been inconsistent, with some classes failing to meet the target enrollment numbers. Despite offering an international curriculum combined with Islamic values and flagship programs like Tahsin and Tahfidz, the school has faced challenges in attracting enough students. This inconsistency can be attributed to various factors such as dissatisfaction with the school's flagship programs, teacher turnover, or changes in students' family situations. There is a need to investigate the causes behind the fluctuation in student numbers and understand what factors such as the school's location, flagship programs, and the quality of teaching are most influential in parents' school selection decisions (Abdulkadiroğlu et al., 2020).

Previous studies have examined various factors influencing parental decision-making in school selection, but there is a gap in the context of international Islamic schools (Alothman et al., 2024). Research highlights that school location plays a significant role in parental decisions, especially when families are looking for convenience. However, other studies indicate that flagship programs, such as English and Islamic studies programs, significantly influence parental choice. These studies provide useful insights, but none have simultaneously considered the combined effect of school location, flagship programs, and teacher quality in an Islamic international school setting, which is essential for understanding the unique characteristics of SD Swasta DRA Islamic School (Kurniawan et al., 2024).

The previous studies focused on general schools or institutions with standardized curriculums (Vignaet al., 2026), which differ from the specific characteristics of SD Swasta DRA Islamic School, which integrates Islamic education with an international curriculum. A gap exists in the research that examines the specific combination of factors like Tahsin and Tahfidz programs, Cambridge curriculum integration, and the impact of teacher quality on school selection. This research aims to fill that gap by studying SD Swasta DRA Islamic School, an institution with unique programs and an international approach, which has not been widely explored in previous literature (Kostova et al., 2020).

This research seeks to answer the question: What factors influence parents' decisions in choosing SD Swasta DRA Islamic School for their children? Specifically, it investigates the roles of flagship programs, school location, and teacher quality in shaping parents' decisions. The contribution of this research is significant as it will provide insights into the specific factors that drive parental decisions in an Islamic school with an international curriculum. Understanding

these factors is essential for the school to improve its programs, meet parental expectations, and stabilize enrollment numbers.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative research design using statistical methods to examine the relationship between dependent and independent variables. A quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for objective measurement and analysis of the factors influencing parental decisions in school selection. The choice of this design ensures that the research can provide clear, quantifiable data that is essential for understanding the impact of specific variables, such as flagship programs, school location, and teacher quality, on parents' decision-making (Asadolahi et al., 2022; Díez et al., 2020).

The research was conducted at SD Swasta DRA Islamic School, located on Jl. Besar Tembung Simpang Jodoh, Kelurahan Bandar Klippa, Kecamatan Percut Sei Tuan, Kabupaten Deli Serdang, North Sumatra. The location was selected because it represents a unique educational environment that integrates international curriculum with Islamic values, offering flagship programs that are central to this study. Furthermore, this school has faced enrollment fluctuations, making it a relevant site to explore the factors influencing parental decisions (Potterton, 2020; Nicholson, 2023).

The population for this study consists of all parents of students in grades 1 through 6 at SD Swasta DRA Islamic School, with a total of 73 individuals. A total sampling technique was employed, meaning that all parents within this population were included in the study. Data were collected using surveys, which were distributed to the parents to gather insights on their perceptions and factors influencing their school selection decisions. The data were analyzed using statistical methods, specifically multiple linear regression, to determine the impact of the independent variables on parental decision-making (To et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Flagship Program Variable on Parental Decision-Making

The regression test yielded a t-value of 9.520, which is greater than the t-table value of 1.994. The significance value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the flagship program variable has a significant and positive influence on parental decision-making in school selection. The positive influence shows that the better the execution of a school's flagship programs, the higher the interest of parents in enrolling their children in that school. The results suggest that the flagship programs at SD Swasta DRA Islamic School play a significant role in influencing parents' decisions.

School Location Variable on Parental Decision-Making

The regression test yielded a t-value of 5.087, which is greater than the t-table value of 1.994. The significance value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the school location variable has a significant influence on parental decision-making in school selection. Based on the regression results, it is evident that the location of the school is an important factor for parents when choosing a school for their children.

Teacher Quality Variable on Parental Decision-Making

The regression test yielded a t-value of 7.143, which is greater than the t-table value of 1.994. The significance value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the teacher quality variable has a significant and positive influence on parental decision-making in school selection. The results suggest that the quality of teachers greatly influences parents' decisions when selecting a school for their children. High-quality teaching and strong teacher-student relationships contribute to a positive learning environment, which parents value when choosing a school.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that flagship programs, school location, and teacher quality each have a significant and positive influence on parents' decisions in choosing a school. These results align with previous studies, which have also identified flagship programs and teacher quality as critical factors in school selection. However, the current study emphasizes the importance of the specific programs offered by SD Swasta DRA Islamic School, such as Tahsin and Tahfidz, which were particularly influential in attracting parents. This is consistent with the notion that specialized programs tailored to the needs and aspirations of the community can be a strong determining factor for parental choices (Alam & Mohanty, 2023; sanders, 2023). In contrast, the significance of the school location supports prior research that has found convenience and accessibility to be vital factors in parents' school decisions. The accessibility of the school ensures that children do not face logistical challenges in attending school regularly, which is critical for parents seeking a stable educational environment for their children (Golsäter et al., 2024; Lehl et al., 2020).

The positive impact of teacher quality on decision-making reflects the growing emphasis on competent and well-qualified teachers in schools. Teachers are not only responsible for academic achievement but also play a significant role in shaping students' social and emotional development. In this study, the quality of teaching was defined through various competencies, including pedagogical skills, professional qualifications, personality traits, and social competencies. These dimensions of teacher quality align with the broader view that teachers

should be capable of providing not only knowledge but also guidance, support, and a positive example for students (Darling-Hammond, 2021). The findings suggest that parents place a high value on these aspects when selecting a school, as they directly affect the overall educational experience and outcomes for their children.

The results of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of how these three factors—flagship programs, school location, and teacher quality—interact and influence parental decision-making. While previous studies have explored these factors individually, this research provides a more comprehensive view by examining them collectively in the context of an Islamic international school. This is particularly important as Islamic schools with international curriculums may offer unique programs that differ from those offered in other types of schools. By identifying the factors that drive parental decisions in such institutions, this study provides valuable insights for school administrators and policymakers seeking to improve school offerings and attract more students (Bhuttah et al., 2024).

One of the key implications of this study is the importance of aligning a school's programs with the expectations and needs of parents. The flagship programs offered by SD Swasta DRA Islamic School, particularly those that focus on Islamic education and character development, play a central role in making the school an attractive choice for parents. As parents become more discerning and selective, schools must be proactive in offering programs that not only align with academic standards but also address the broader developmental needs of students (Fu, Wu, & Zhuo, 2024). In addition, the school must ensure that its teacher quality is maintained and improved, as competent teachers are integral to ensuring the success of any educational program.

Furthermore, the location of the school continues to be an essential factor in parental decision-making. Parents prioritize schools that are easily accessible, safe, and conducive to their children's well-being. Schools located in more urbanized or convenient areas are likely to see higher enrollment, as parents value convenience and reduced commuting time. This aspect should be considered by schools when planning their infrastructure and outreach efforts, particularly in areas with limited transportation options or where access to educational institutions may be challenging (Bierbaum et al., 2021). By focusing on these key areas, SD Swasta DRA Islamic School and similar institutions can enhance their appeal to prospective students and families.

Finally, the findings of this study have practical implications for school marketing strategies. Schools with international curriculums, such as SD Swasta DRA Islamic School, can benefit from highlighting their flagship programs, the quality of their teachers, and the accessibility of their location in their

promotional materials. Schools should also focus on building strong relationships with parents and ensuring that they are aware of the specific advantages that the school offers. This can be achieved through open communication, targeted marketing campaigns, and consistent evaluation of the programs and services offered to the school community (Rehman et al., 2022; Labanauskaitė et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

The key findings of this research highlight the significant influence of flagship programs, school location, and teacher quality on parents' decisions to choose SD Swasta DRA Islamic School. The flagship programs were found to be the most powerful factor in parents' decisions, as they align with their educational expectations for their children. Additionally, the location of the school, with its accessibility, comfort, and security, plays a critical role in parents' considerations. Lastly, the quality of teachers at the school positively impacts parental decisions, as high-quality teaching fosters trust and confidence in the school's ability to educate their children effectively. The main lesson from this study is that schools must continuously enhance their programs, ensure convenient locations, and invest in teacher quality to meet parental expectations and attract more students.

This study contributes to the academic field by providing valuable insights into how these specific factors—flagship programs, location, and teacher quality—interact to influence parental decision-making in selecting an Islamic international school. However, the study has some limitations, such as its focus on only one school, which may not fully represent other similar institutions. Future research could expand on this study by including multiple schools with different curricula to examine the broader applicability of these findings. Additionally, further studies could explore the long-term impact of these factors on student success and overall school performance.

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