

# STRATEGY TO INCREASE STUDENT INTEREST THROUGH SERVICE QUALITY, PROMOTION, AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION FEES

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## ABSTRACT

*Student interest in school selection is shaped by various factors, including educational quality, facilities, tuition fees, location, institutional reputation, personal preferences, and parental support. This study aims to examine the influence of service quality, promotion, and educational costs on students' interest in choosing a school. Employing a quantitative approach, data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 72 respondents and analyzed using SPSS version 24. The results indicate that service quality (X1) and educational costs (X3) do not significantly influence student interest (Y), as evidenced by T-count values of 0.573 and 0.027, both below the T-table threshold of 1.995. Conversely, promotion (X2) demonstrates a significant positive effect on student interest, with a T-count of 2.349 and a significance value of 0.022. The F-test results reveal that, collectively, the three variables do not exert a simultaneous influence on student interest ( $F\text{-count} = 2.532 < F\text{-table} = 3.12$ ;  $p = 0.064 > 0.05$ ). The novelty of this research lies in its identification of promotion as the primary factor influencing student enrollment decisions, despite the commonly assumed importance of service quality and costs. These findings offer practical implications for educational institutions, particularly Islamic schools, in designing targeted and effective marketing strategies to enhance student recruitment.*

## INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia is an important pillar in forming a quality and competitive generation (Arifin & Kartiko, 2022). However, the current social phenomena show that there is a gap in access to quality education, especially for people from lower middle economic backgrounds (Muhsin, 2022). The high cost of education is often a barrier for many families to continue their children's education to a higher level (Arif, 2025; Fitria A, 2024). This causes discrimination in the world of education, where children from underprivileged families are forced to drop out of school or are unable to receive a decent education. This condition is very concerning, considering that education is a basic right that every individual should have, in accordance with the mandate of the 1945 Constitution. Article 31 Paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution emphasizes that every citizen has the right to receive an education, and the state is obliged to guarantee that this right is fulfilled (Selviana et al., 2024). However, in reality, many children are forced to stop their education due to financial constraints (Ananda et al., 2025). This situation creates a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break, where the younger generation does not get the opportunity to develop their potential to the fullest. Therefore,

this challenge requires serious attention from the government and society. Collaborative efforts are needed to ensure that education is a right that can be accessed by all levels of society, without exception, so that every child has an equal opportunity to achieve a better future.

Previous research shows that education has a crucial role in the progress of the nation and state (Kartiko et al., 2025; Ma'arif et al., 2024; Zakariyah et al., 2022). Several studies published in reputable international journals reveal that quality education not only makes individuals smarter, but also contributes to the social and economic development of a country (Arif et al., 2025; Hanushek, 2020; Li & Sun, 2025). In this context, education serves as a tool to improve the quality of human resources, which in turn can encourage economic growth and social stability. (Geo-Jaja & Mangum, 2003; Mashuri et al., 2024). Other studies emphasize that the quality of educational services, including infrastructure, teaching, and financial support, greatly influences students' interest in continuing their education (Iqbal, 2023; Kango, Kartiko, & Zamawi, 2021; Masserini et al., 2019). Data shows that the high cost of quality education can result in low levels of educational completion (Fadhila & Riani, 2024; Kurniawati, 2022; Ratnasari & Nugraheni, 2024), especially at the high school level, where the graduation rate is still below the ideal standard (Fadil et al., 2023; Suryana, 2020). This creates a major challenge for the education system, with many students from lower-middle economic backgrounds forced to stop their education. Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to improve the quality of services and promotional strategies to attract students. In addition, the government also needs to provide greater financial support so that education can be accessed by all groups. With these steps, education will not only be a right that can be accessed by all, but also serve as a driver of progress for the nation and state in the future, creating a more competent and competitive generation.

Although previous studies have shown the importance of education in social and economic progress, there is a significant gap between these findings and the empirical reality faced by society, especially in Indonesia. Research by (Rahaju, 2025) highlighting the role of quality education in improving the quality of human resources and driving economic growth. However, they do not address in depth the specific impacts of high tuition fees on the accessibility and participation of students from lower-middle-class economic backgrounds. This creates a gap in our understanding of how economic and social factors interact to influence educational decisions, and how existing education policies can be improved to address these issues. Furthermore, while there is recognition that the quality of educational services plays a significant role in attracting students, existing research has not sufficiently explored concrete strategies that educational institutions can employ to improve the accessibility and quality of education.

This study aims to analyze the influence of service quality, promotion, and education costs on new students' interest in choosing an educational institution. In facing increasingly tight competition between educational institutions, it is important to understand the factors that influence prospective students' decisions. The focus of this study is directed at measuring the extent to which each variable significantly influences student interest, as well as identifying which variables have the most dominant influence. By understanding this, educational institutions can design more effective strategies in attracting prospective students' interest by improving service quality, optimizing promotions, and adjusting education costs according to the socio-economic conditions of the community. The results of this study are expected to provide practical contributions to the development of managerial strategies and educational policies that are more adaptive to the needs and preferences of students and the wider community.

## **METHODS**

This study adopts a quantitative research approach, which is employed to systematically and accurately describe the factual relationships between variables influencing student enrollment

interest, particularly at the Mamba'ul Ulum Main Foundation, located in Awang-awang Village, Mojosari District, Mojokerto Regency. The quantitative design is appropriate for testing hypotheses, measuring variables, and examining causal associations within a structured framework (Quick & Hall, 2015). The research utilizes a causal-associative approach (Tacq, 2011), aimed at identifying and analyzing the cause-and-effect relationships among variables. This approach facilitates the development of a theoretical model capable of explaining, predicting, and controlling specific educational phenomena, particularly in the context of Islamic secondary education. The study investigates one dependent variable new student interest (Y) and three independent variables: service quality (X1), promotion (X2), and education costs (X3). The operationalization of each variable is reflected through measurable indicators as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Operational Matrix of Research Variables**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Code</b>
<b>Service Quality (X1)</b>	Physical Facilities	X1.1
	Academic Quality	X1.2
	Learning Outcomes	X1.3
	Responsiveness	X1.4
	Personal Development	X1.5
<b>Promotion (X2)</b>	Advertising	X2.1
	Personal Selling	X2.2
	Sales Promotion	X2.3
<b>Education Costs (X3)</b>	Investment Costs	X3.1
	Operational Costs	X3.2
	Personal Costs	X3.3
<b>Student Interest (Y)</b>	Interest	Y1.1
	Attention	Y1.2
	Motivation	Y1.3
	Knowledge	Y1.4

The population in this study includes students in Grades X and XI at Madrasah Aliyah Mamba'ul Ulum. The sampling technique employed was probability sampling, which ensures that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. A total of 72 students were chosen as respondents.

Data collection was conducted using structured questionnaires distributed directly to the respondents. The instrument utilized a Likert scale to assess responses, allowing the quantification of students' perceptions (Robinson, 2023; Taherdoost, 2022). The design of the questionnaire and its administration were tailored to ensure relevance and clarity in the context of Islamic educational settings. The instrument testing included both validity and reliability analysis, with reliability assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha method (Utami, 2023). To ensure robust statistical analysis, several classical assumption tests were performed, including normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests (Poole & O'Farrell, 1971).

The hypothesis testing was conducted using multiple linear regression analysis, employing the following model:  $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + e$ . Subsequently, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), t-tests (for partial significance), and F-tests (for simultaneous significance) were conducted to evaluate the explanatory power and statistical significance of the independent variables (Serlin, 1987). This methodological approach enables a structured understanding of how service quality, promotion, and education costs impact students' interest in Islamic school enrollment, offering valuable implications for policy development and school marketing strategies in Islamic education contexts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### General Perceptions of Curriculum Innovation

#### Validity and Reliability Test

Based on the results of the validity test, it was found that the overall value of the  $r$  table was greater when compared to the calculated  $r$ . The value of the  $r$  table in this study was 0.361. Based on this, it can be concluded that all of these question items can be declared valid. The reliable value of this study can be seen in table 2 below.

**Table 2, Reliability Test Results**

No	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
1	Student Interest	0.757	Reliable
2	Service Quality	0.772	Reliable
3	Promotion	0.782	Reliable
4	Education Fees	0.835	Reliable

Based on Table 2 which displays the results of the reliability test, it can be concluded that all variables in this study showed a very good level of internal consistency. This is evidenced by the Cronbach's Alpha value of each variable being above the minimum threshold of 0.70, which is generally recognized as an indicator of adequate reliability in social research. In particular, the Education Cost variable obtained the highest reliability value (0.835), indicating that the instrument used to measure respondents' perceptions of education costs was very consistent. Meanwhile, the Promotion variable (0.782), Service Quality (0.772), and Student Interest (0.757) also showed good reliability and could be trusted in measuring each construct. Thus, all instruments used in this study can be declared reliable, so they are worthy of being used for further analysis to test the relationship between the variables studied. This finding strengthens the credibility of the research results and becomes a strong foundation for drawing valid conclusions.

#### Normality Test

Normality test is done using Kolmogorov Smirnov method in SPSS24. The decision-making data is normally distributed if the significance value is  $> 0.05$ , if the significance value is  $< 0.05$  then the data is not normally distributed. This can be seen in the table below.

**Table 3, One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality**

		Unstandardized Residual
N		72
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	0,0000000
	Std. Deviation	4,37959447
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	0,076
	Positive	0,076
	Negative	-0,067
Test Statistic		0,076
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200 <sup>c,d</sup>

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

The residual data in this regression model is normally distributed, which means that one of the important assumptions in linear regression analysis has been met. This strengthens the validity of the regression model used in the study and supports the reliability of the interpretation of the analysis results.

### Uji Linearitas

Linearity testing is conducted to ensure whether the relationship between two variables is significantly linear. The benchmark in drawing conclusions in this test is based on the significance value. If the significance value is greater than 0.05, then it can be concluded that there is a linear relationship between the two variables. Conversely, if the significance value is less than 0.05, then the relationship between the two variables is not linear or deviates from the linear pattern. The following results of the linearity test are presented in table 4 below.

**Table 4 Linearity Test Results**

Variabel	<i>Deviation from Linearity</i>	Keterangan
(Y).(X1)	.116	Linear
(Y).(X2)	.338	Linear
(Y).(X3)	.787	Linear

Dari data diatas menunjukkan bahwa nilai sig pada uji linearitas mendapatkan nilai 0.116, 0.338 dan 0.787 yang mana nilai tersebut >0.05 maka antara Variabel Y dan X1, variabel Y dan X2, Variabel Y dan X3 sama-sama memiliki hubungan yang linear.

### Multicollinearity Test

To find out if there is a very strong relationship between independent variables in a regression model, a multicollinearity test is performed. A regression model is said to be feasible if there is no high correlation between the independent variables. Evaluation of this condition is done by considering the tolerance value and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) number. To find out if there is a very strong relationship between the independent variables in a regression model, a multicollinearity test is performed. A regression model is said to be feasible if there is no high correlation between the independent variables. Evaluation of this condition is done by considering the tolerance value and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) number..

**Table 5 Multicollinearity Test Results**

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Information
X <sub>1</sub>	<b>0.936</b>	<b>1.069</b>	<b>Nonmulticollinearity</b>
X <sub>2</sub>	<b>0.851</b>	<b>1.175</b>	<b>Nonmulticollinearity</b>
X <sub>3</sub>	<b>0.872</b>	<b>1.174</b>	<b>Nonmulticollinearity</b>

Based on the results of the multicollinearity test, the tolerance value is known to be > 0.10.00, namely 0.936, 0.851, and 0. 872, and the VIF value is 1.069, 1.175, and 1.147 < 0.10.00. then it is concluded that there is no multicollinearity. The regression model is considered good if the residual value is constant or there is no heteroscedasticity. If the significance value between the independent variable and its absolute residual is more than 0.05, there is no heteroscedasticity, the results of the heteroscedasticity test can be seen in the following table 6.

**Table 6 Results Of Heteroscedasticity Test**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-0,253	6,940		-0,036	0,971
	X1	0,046	0,088	0,065	0,529	0,599
	X2	-0,035	0,034	-0,130	-1,002	0,320
	X3	0,036	0,037	0,125	0,973	0,334
a. Dependent Variable: ABS RES						

From the results of the heteroscedasticity test using SPSS24 with the Glejser method, the results of the significance value of X1 (Service Quality) were 0.599 and the results of the significance value of variable X2 (Promotion) were 0.320 and the results of the significance value of variable X3 (Education Costs) were 0.334, so it can be concluded that in this study there was no heteroscedasticity.

### Hypothesis Testing

To find out if there is a very strong relationship between independent variables in a regression model, a multicollinearity test is performed. A regression model is said to be feasible if there is no high correlation between the independent variables. Evaluation of this condition is done by considering the tolerance value and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) number. To find out if there is a very strong relationship between the independent variables in a regression model, a multicollinearity test is performed. A regression model is said to be feasible if there is no high correlation between the independent variables. Evaluation of this condition is done by considering the tolerance value and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) number..

The results of the multiple linear regression test based on the SPSS24 output results with 3 independent variables, namely Service Quality (X1), Promotion (X2), and Education Costs (X3) with the regression equation below.

**Table 7 Multiple Linear Regression Test Results**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	54,957	13,066		4,206
	X1	0,095	0,165	0,068	0,569
	X2	0,153	0,065	0,293	0,022
	X3	0,002	0,070	0,003	0,978

a. Dependent Variable: Y

In the table above, column B explains the value of a regression equation that can be produced as follows:  $Y = 54.957 + 0.095 X1 + 0.153 X2 + 0.002 X3 + e$ , through the equation above it can be explained as follows, First, the regression constant of 54.957 reflects a positive relationship between the independent factors and the aspects explained. This indicates that when all independent factors such as Service Quality (X1), Promotion (X2), and Education Costs (X3) do not provide a value (zero value), then Student Interest remains at 54.957. Second, the regression coefficient for Service Quality (X1) is recorded at 0.095 with a positive direction. The higher the quality provided in the service, the tendency of students to show interest will increase proportionally, third, the magnitude of the coefficient on the Promotion variable (X2) shows a positive value of 0.153. This means that the more intensive the promotional efforts are carried out, the level of interest from students will also increase significantly and the four education cost variables (X3) show a regression coefficient of 0.002 which is positive. This shows that the expenditure incurred for education has an influence in increasing student interest, although the impact is relatively small.

Testing of the determination coefficient value is carried out to determine the extent to which the regression model is able to describe the changes that occur in the dependent variable. Information on the test results is presented in the table below.

**Table 8 Results of Determination Coefficient Test**

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.317 <sup>a</sup>	.100	.061	4.475
a. Predictors: (Constant), X3, X1, X2				
b. Dependent Variable: Y				

The R Square value in this test shows a figure of 0.100 (10%) in this regression model. This shows that the independent variables used in this study have an effect of 10%. The variables of Service Quality, promotion and education costs have an effect of 10% on the student interest variable. The remaining 90% (100% -10%) is influenced by other variables not studied by the researcher.

For partial tests, the T Test is conducted to determine how much influence is given to each independent variable individually (Partial) with a significant value determination of >0.05.

**Table 9 T-Test Results**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	54,957	13,066		4,206	0,000
	X1	0,095	0,165	0,068	0,573	0,569
	X2	0,153	0,065	0,293	2,349	0,022
	X3	0,002	0,070	0,003	0,027	0,978
a. Dependent Variable: Y						

The description of the results of the tests that have been carried out are as follows, 1) To determine the value of ttable, the formula  $t_{table} = t(a / 2; n-k-1) = t(0.05 / 2; 72-4-1) = (0.025; 68) = 1.995$  can be used, using a sample of 72 and a significance level of 0.05. The service quality variable obtained a tcount of 0.057. The promotion variable obtained a tcount of 2.349 and the education cost variable obtained a tcount of 0.027. 2) The results obtained on the service quality variable (X1) tcount 0.573 <from ttable of 1.995, and a significance value of 0.569> 0.05, which means that there is no significant influence on the service quality variable on the student interest variable. 3) In the Promotion variable (X2), the t-count result is 2.349 > t-table 1.995, and the significance value is 0.022 < 0.05, which means that the promotion variable has a significant influence on the student interest variable of 15.3% or 0.153, and 4) In the Education Cost variable (X3), the t-count result is 0.027 < t-table 1.995, and the significance value is 0.978 > 0.05, which means that the education cost variable does not have a significant influence on the student interest variable..

The F test is conducted to determine the extent to which the independent variable is able to influence the dependent variable. This test is conducted by comparing F count with F table. Another way to find out the results of this test is by looking at the significant value with a significance level of 0.05 (5%). From the results of the F test, the following results were obtained.

**Table 10 F Test Results**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	152,146	3	50,715	2,532	.064 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	1361,840	68	20,027		
	Total	1513,986	71			
a. Dependent Variable: Y						
b. Predictors: (Constant), X3, X1, X2						

The explanation of the results of the F test conducted above is as follows, Comparing the F count value with the F table. The F table obtained from the test using SPSS24 is 2.532, and F table = k; n-k = (4; 72-4) = (4; 68) = 3.12 with an error rate of 5%. With this calculation, it is known that F count (2.532) <F table (3.12) so it is concluded that the three independent variables of Service Quality (X1), Promotion (X2), and Education Costs (X3) do not affect the Student Interest variable (Y) simultaneously. So the hypothesis cannot be accepted, and Based on the results of the calculation

above showing a significance value of  $0.064 > 0.05$ , it can be concluded that service quality, promotion, and education costs do not significantly affect student interest.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study was conducted to determine the effect of service quality, promotion and education costs on student interest at Madrasah Aliyah Mamba'ul Ulum Mojosari. The method used in this study is a quantitative method, namely a method that pays attention to data that will be collected by researchers through research instruments which will then be processed through testing to provide an overview of the research variables intended by the researcher.

Based on the results of the study that have been described previously, it can be seen that service quality and education costs do not have an effect on student interest in deciding to choose a school. While promotion has an effect on student interest in choosing a school. This proves that service quality and education costs are not the main things in choosing a school at Madrasah Aliyah Mamba'ul Ulum. However, promotion has an effect on student interest. The following is a description of the discussion of the results of the research that has been carried out.

### **The Influence of Service Quality on Student Interest at Madrasah Aliyah Mamba'ul Ulum Mojosari**

This study aims to examine the relationship between service quality and student interest in choosing Madrasah Aliyah Mamba'ul Ulum Mojosari. The results of the regression analysis show that service quality does not have a significant effect on student interest, as indicated by a significance value of  $0.569 (> 0.05)$ . This strengthens that statistically, service quality is not the main predictor in shaping student interest. Theoretically, this study attempts to integrate the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) from as a grand theory (Bosnjak et al., 2020). TPB explains that a person's intention to perform an action (in this case choosing a school) is influenced by three main factors: attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In this context, service quality can be categorized as part of the attitude towards the institution (attitudinal beliefs). However, the results of this study indicate that the attitude factor (perception of service quality) is not dominant enough to influence student interest, so it is likely that subjective norms (influence of parents, friends, or community leaders) and perceived control (ability to access schools or costs) play a more major role.

Ketidaksignifikanan hubungan ini juga memperkuat temuan dalam studi sebelumnya seperti yang dikemukakan oleh penelitian (Fadila et al., 2025), which states that the decision to choose an educational institution is not solely determined by the quality of internal services, but is greatly influenced by external factors such as promotion, social reputation, and collective opinion of the community. In an Islamic boarding school-based educational environment, for example, considerations of spirituality, family beliefs, and social relations are much more prominent than the physical or administrative attributes of the school. On the other hand, Kusjono and Sudjiani state that service quality is an institutional effort to meet consumer expectations, and its success lies in how far the service is perceived as valuable by users. Although Madrasah Aliyah Mamba'ul Ulum has provided services with adequate standards including decent physical facilities, stable academic services, and efforts to develop students' personal lives, the fact that these services do not significantly contribute to student interest is an important finding that deserves attention.

This finding provides two important contributions. First, theoretically, it challenges the assumption in many previous studies that service quality will be linearly proportional to the intention to choose an educational institution. Second, practically, this result signals to school managers that although educational services are important for long-term reputation, marketing strategies and emotional approaches to prospective students and parents need more attention. In addition, in the framework of strategic education management, good service quality remains the main capital in building value propositions and competitive advantages. In other words, although it does not directly affect current student interest, the existence of quality services creates differentiation and an institutional image in the eyes of the public. Ini sejalan dengan pandangan Parasuraman, Zeithaml, dan Berry (1988) in (Palupi et al., 2025) about the five dimensions of service quality (SERVQUAL):

tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Schools that are able to maintain these dimensions will have a stronger position in the education market.

However, to increase the overall attractiveness of the institution, schools must be more active in identifying social and psychological factors that influence student preferences. For example, developing a school branding program based on religious values and local communities, building interpersonal relationships with community leaders, and conducting promotions based on successful alumni testimonials. Overall, good service quality remains relevant in building institutional trust capital. However, in order to increase student interest significantly, it is necessary to develop a more effective communication strategy, an approach based on students' emotional needs, and an integration between internal quality and external perceptions formed through social experiences and systematic promotions.

### **The Influence of Promotion on Student Interest at Madrasah Aliyah Mamba'ul Ulum**

The results of the hypothesis test in this study indicate that promotion has a positive and significant influence on students' interest in choosing Madrasah Aliyah Mamba'ul Ulum Mojokari as a place to study. This is evidenced by a significance value of 0.022 ( $<0.05$ ) and a Tcount value of 2.349 ( $> T_{table} 1.995$ ), which statistically confirms that the promotion variable significantly contributes to shaping prospective students' decisions. A positive regression coefficient indicates that the better and more effective the promotional activities carried out by the madrasah, the higher the level of student interest in registering. This finding can be explained theoretically through the AIDA Model approach (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) developed by Strong (1925) (Muliana, 2024) and is often used in modern marketing science. This model explains that effective promotion must be able to attract attention, grow interest, arouse desire, and finally encourage action, in this case the decision to enroll in school. In the context of education, promotion not only conveys information about learning programs, but also functions as a medium to shape public perception about the image, quality, and added value of educational institutions.

Madrasah Aliyah Mamba'ul Ulum has implemented a comprehensive promotional approach by combining conventional and digital promotional strategies. Activities such as distributing brochures, installing banners, holding open houses, and optimizing social media (Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp) are part of a consistent and communicative promotional mix strategy. This shows that the madrasah has adapted to the development of the digital era, and understands the importance of visual and emotional communication in attracting the interest of the younger generation. Furthermore, promotions carried out by educational institutions are not only informative, but must also build the institution's brand equity in the minds of the public. As explained by Keller (1993) in the theory of Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) (Asamoah, 2014), promotion serves to form identity, meaning, response, and loyalty to a brand or institution. In the context of madrasahs, promotions that emphasize the excellence of the tahfidz program, Islamic character building, and alumni success have succeeded in forming positive perceptions that have led to increased interest from prospective students.

An interesting fact from this study is the direct recognition from respondents who stated that their decision to choose a school was influenced by exposure to promotional materials (Arif et al., 2023). Several students admitted to being interested because they saw posts on social media that displayed the school atmosphere, alumni testimonials, and students' academic and non-academic achievements. This finding is in line with the views of (Elken, 2020) who stated that educational marketing must be participatory and narrative, not just transactional. In practice, these results provide important implications for school management in developing student recruitment strategies. Promotion should not be viewed as a seasonal activity ahead of accepting new students, but rather as an ongoing process that builds emotional relationships and public trust in educational institutions.

Therefore, a professional promotion team, attractive message design, and the use of communication platforms that are relevant to the behavior of today's digital generation are needed.

Thus, it can be concluded that promotion has a crucial role in shaping student interest. Effective promotional activities not only convey institutional information, but also form a positive psychological impression, influence subjective norms through public opinion, and increase students' intention to enroll. In the framework of modern educational marketing, promotion has become an important pillar in winning the competition between educational institutions, especially in the competitive digital era.

### **The Influence of Education Costs on Student Interest at Madrasah Aliyah Mamba`ul Ulum**

Based on the results of the hypothesis test analysis, it is known that the variable of education costs does not have a significant effect on students' interest in choosing Madrasah Aliyah Mamba`ul Ulum Mojosari. This is evidenced by the T-value of 0.027 which is smaller than T-table 1.995, and the significance value of 0.978 which is far above the threshold of 0.05. This finding statistically shows that perceptions of education costs are not the main determinant in prospective students' decisions to enroll in this school. Theoretically, this result can be explained by referring to the Value-Based Decision Theory, which emphasizes that consumers, including in the context of education, tend to make decisions based on perceived value or the value of benefits felt compared to the costs that must be incurred (Amir et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2007). In this case, it seems that parents and prospective students consider that the cost of education at Madrasah Aliyah Mamba`ul Ulum is still commensurate with the quality and benefits offered, such as educational facilities, religious programs, character development, and academic opportunities. Therefore, although cost is a rational consideration, it does not significantly affect preferences if the value of the benefits offered is considered adequate.

This finding can also be linked to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, particularly at the level of self-actualization and educational security needs (Abbas, 2020). In many families, especially in Islamic boarding schools or madrasahs, the decision to choose a school is not only based on economic logic, but also on religious values, social environment, and characters building guarantees. This is in line with field observations that most respondents come from families with a strong Islamic education orientation, and are classified as socio-economic groups that are not very sensitive to cost variations. The insignificance of the influence of costs also reflects a shift in the orientation of society towards education. If in classical economic theory costs are considered as a variable determining demand (Law of Demand), then in the context of modern education, especially in religious-based institutions, value factors, institutional credibility, and social recommendations tend to have a higher weight in decision making. This is supported by a study by Chapman (1981) in the context of student college choice, which states that price or cost factors become less dominant when students are faced with the choice of institutions with a strong social image or religious values.

Madrasah Aliyah Mamba`ul Ulum also seems to have succeeded in building public perception that the set education fees are proportional, transparent, and accompanied by adequate facilities. The balance between costs and services provided creates a positive image that minimizes resistance to price. Thus, although costs are an important element in education management, they do not necessarily become an obstacle in attracting student interest. The implications of this finding are quite important for educational institution managers. First, the determination of costs must still consider the value for money aspect felt by the community, but there is no need to focus too much on discount or subsidy policies if the value of the services offered is high. Second, the focus of the school's marketing and communication strategies should be directed at the added value offered by the school, such as the quality of Islamic education, excellent programs, and alumni achievements.

Thus, it can be concluded that education costs are not a key factor in influencing student interest in Madrasah Aliyah Mamba'ul Ulum. The decision to choose a school is more influenced by the perception of value, institutional reputation, and socio-cultural factors inherent in Islamic educational institutions. Therefore, strategies to increase student interest should be more focused on strengthening the image, quality of service, and social approaches that form a positive public perception of the educational institution..

#### **The Influence of Service Quality, Promotion and Education Costs on Student Interest at Madrasah Aliyah Mamba'ul Ulum**

Based on the results of the multiple linear regression test that has been conducted, it is known that simultaneously the variables of service quality (X1), promotion (X2), and education costs (X3) do not have a significant effect on student interest (Y) in choosing Madrasah Aliyah Mamba'ul Ulum. This is indicated by the significance value of the F test of 0.064 which is greater than the significance limit of 0.05, and the F count value of 2.532 which is smaller than the F table of 3.12. Thus, this regression model is statistically insignificant, and the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) which states that there is no simultaneous influence between the three independent variables on the dependent variable cannot be rejected.

Statistically, these results indicate that although partially there is a significant influence of the promotion variable on student interest, when viewed as a whole (simultaneously), the three variables do not have sufficient predictive power to explain the variability of student interest. This indicates a weak collective contribution from the independent variables in explaining changes in the dependent variable. Theoretically, these results challenge the general paradigm in educational marketing management which is based on the Marketing Mix model and the Service Quality (SERVQUAL) approach. (Ikhwan et al., 2025). In this approach, it is assumed that service quality, promotion, and price (cost) are the main determinants in influencing consumer decisions (in this case students and parents). However, in the context of Madrasah Aliyah Mamba'ul Ulum, it seems that there are other factors outside this model that have a more significant influence in determining prospective students' decisions.

Other Factors That May Be More Dominant, This finding strengthens the possibility of mediating variables or external variables that have not been included in the model, such as, the influence of parents or family, especially in the context of Islamic education, where the decision to choose a school is greatly influenced by family values. The influence of peers who have emotional and social effects on adolescent decision making. The reputation and image of the institution that is socially formed from the opinions of the community, alumni, or religious figures. Geographical proximity to the student's residence, which is often a major consideration in the context of secondary schools in semi-urban areas and the quality of graduates and the continuation of education to higher levels or to the world of work.

Although service quality is an important aspect in the management of educational institutions and greatly influences the satisfaction and loyalty of students who are already in school, in the context of initial selection (pre-registration), this variable has not been directly felt by prospective students. This means that the perception of service quality has not been formed strongly because students do not have real experience. Meanwhile, promotion as one of the elements in the school's marketing communication strategy shows a significant partial influence, but is not strong enough when combined with two other variables in influencing student interest simultaneously. This indicates the need for a re-evaluation of the approach, media, content, and target audience in the school's promotion strategy to better suit the psychological and social needs of prospective students. The cost of education has not been proven to be significant, either partially or simultaneously. This shows that the cost aspect is considered reasonable, affordable, or commensurate with the value offered by the school. This can also be interpreted that in the context of the respondents in this study, the cost factor

is not a major obstacle because the public perception has accepted costs as part of the education investment.

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for the management of Islamic educational institutions. First, to develop more accurate predictive models of student interest, future research should incorporate additional variables that reflect local sociological, psychological, and cultural dynamics, particularly those rooted in Islamic values and community traditions. Second, schools particularly madrasahs should regularly conduct local education market analyses to identify the specific needs, expectations, and emotional motivations of both students and parents. This mapping process enables institutions to align their offerings with the socio-religious aspirations of the target community.

Third, promotional strategies should be integrated with experiential approaches, such as organizing campus visits for prospective students, hosting open-house classes, and utilizing testimonials from current students and alumni. These initiatives help shape positive initial perceptions and build trust, especially in communities where religious and social endorsement plays a critical role in school choice. Finally, madrasahs must engage in strategic education market segmentation by identifying and targeting specific community groups based on economic conditions, cultural-religious values, and educational motivations. This allows schools to tailor promotional messages and service offerings that resonate with the spiritual and aspirational identity of their stakeholders. These strategies not only enhance student recruitment but also reinforce the unique positioning of Islamic schools in an increasingly competitive educational landscape.

The results of this study reject research conducted by (Arif, 2024; Azkiyah et al., 2020), explains that promotion is a dominant factor followed by service quality in attracting students' interest in choosing a school or educational institution. In addition (Kango, Kartiko, & Maarif, 2021) The results of the study revealed that promotion has a significant influence on the decision to choose a college, in addition, the image of education also has a significant influence on the decision, so that effective promotion will form a positive image, and this image will increase the possibility of prospective students choosing the institution.

By rejecting several previous research findings, this study provides a new contribution to the literature on educational marketing, especially in the context of Islamic educational institutions in semi-urban areas. In contrast to previous studies that concluded that service quality, promotion, and educational costs have a significant influence on student interest, the results of this study actually show that the three variables simultaneously do not have a significant influence. This indicates that there are other factors that are more dominant in influencing the decision to choose a school, which have not been widely revealed in previous studies, thus challenging the dominant paradigm in educational marketing, as well as the need for further exploration of socio-cultural, religious, or psychological variables in the context of religious-based schools.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of the data analysis on the influence of service quality, promotional strategies, and education costs on prospective students' interest in attending Madrasah Aliyah Mamba'ul Ulum Mojosari, it can be concluded that service quality does not show a significant influence on student interest. Although it is expected that aspects such as infrastructure and potential development can attract student interest, the results of the statistical analysis show that this relationship is not quantitatively significant. On the contrary, promotional strategies are proven to have a real impact on student interest, confirming the importance of an innovative approach in educational marketing. On the other hand, the aspect of educational financing does not have a significant effect on student interest, indicating that cost factors may not be the main barrier in their decision to attend school.

Thus, schools are advised to improve more effective and innovative promotional strategies, and pay attention to service quality in terms of communication and response to student needs. In addition, transparency in the structure of educational costs also needs to be considered to build trust among prospective students and parents. For academics, the results of this study can be a reference for developing educational marketing theories, while further researchers are expected to explore other variables that may influence student interest. By expanding the population and sample to various types of schools, it is expected that more comprehensive and generalizable findings can be obtained. This study provides important insights for the development of educational strategies that are more inclusive and responsive to students' needs.

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