

The Influence of Students', Interests and Family Support through Islamic Boarding School Culture on Higher Education Institution Choice

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of students' interests and family support on the selection of higher education institutions, with pesantren culture as an intervening variable. This research employs a quantitative approach using the Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method. The sample consists of 51 twelfth-grade students at MAS Al-Muslimun Lhoksukon, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using SEM-PLS to examine both direct and indirect relationships among variables. The results indicate that students' interests and family support have a positive and significant effect on pesantren culture. However, students' interests, family support, and pesantren culture do not have a significant effect on the selection of higher education institutions. Furthermore, pesantren culture is not proven to mediate the relationship between students' interests and family support on higher education selection. These findings suggest that students' interests and family support play a more significant role in shaping pesantren culture than in directly influencing higher education choices. Therefore, further research is recommended to consider other factors such as economic conditions, access to information, and career prospects in order to better understand the decision-making process in selecting higher education institutions.

Keywords: Students' Interest, Family Support, Pesantren Culture, Higher Education Selection

INTRODUCTION

The transition from Madrasah Aliyah (MA) to higher education represents a critical stage in the academic development and future prospects of santri. At this stage, santri are confronted with various educational options that may significantly influence their career trajectories, competency development, and social mobility in the future. The decision to pursue higher education is not solely determined by academic considerations; it is also

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shaped by a range of psychological, social, economic, and cultural factors embedded within the students' environment, including the culture of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and the support provided by their families. (Kurnia & Deviyantoro, 2023; Kusmarwanto et al., 2023).

The process of selecting a higher education institution continues to present several issues that warrant further investigation. First, there is inconsistency in the findings of previous studies regarding the primary factors influencing prospective students' decision-making, including tuition costs, promotional activities, institutional facilities, and the reputation of higher education institutions. (Putra et al., 2022). Second, the prioritization of factors influencing higher education institution selection in Indonesia differs significantly from that observed in other countries. Therefore, comparative research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of how cultural and social contexts shape students' decision-making processes across different regions. (Pramudiyanto et al., 2024). Third, many existing studies continue to rely on descriptive approaches, while relatively few have explored the complex interactions among influencing factors from a multidimensional perspective. In fact, the decision-making process involved in selecting a higher education institution is inherently complex and encompasses a wide range of interrelated internal and external factors. (Mahendra Fakhri, Alini Gilang, 2017). Fourth, there remains a limited body of research examining the long-term consequences of inappropriate higher education institution choices on students' academic achievement and psychological well-being. This gap represents an important issue that warrants immediate scholarly attention. Finally, the limited scope of samples, which are often confined to specific regions or institutions, restricts the generalizability of research findings at the national level. Therefore, studies employing broader and more representative samples are urgently needed to generate more comprehensive and generalizable evidence. (Saefurahman et al., 2023)

Based on survey findings, the selection of higher education institutions in Indonesia is influenced by several key factors. One of the most dominant determinants is institutional reputation. The survey revealed that leading universities, such as Universitas Indonesia (UI), Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), and Universitas Diponegoro (Undip), ranked among the top positions in the list of the 60 best higher education institutions according to the SCImago Institutions Rankings (SIR) 2024. In addition to institutional reputation, tuition costs constitute an important consideration, particularly for prospective students from low-income families. Furthermore, interest in academic programs and the availability of campus facilities also contribute to students' decision-making processes, although their influence is relatively less significant.

In terms of information sources, social media platforms and official university websites serve as the primary channels through which prospective students obtain information about higher education institutions. Nevertheless, higher education participation in Indonesia remains relatively low, with the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) reaching only approximately 32%. This condition is influenced by various barriers, including the high cost of education, limited admission capacity at public universities,

disparities in access based on geographical location, and socio-psychological factors such as a lack of self-confidence among prospective students.

These findings underscore the importance of developing comprehensive strategies to enhance access to higher education and strengthen prospective students' interest in selecting institutions that align with their academic potential, aspirations, and individual needs. (Pramudiyanto et al., 2024; Syahroni & Firmadhani, 2021; Wike Vivi et al., 2024).

Decision-making in selecting a higher education institution is a complex process, as it involves the interaction of various internal and external factors. Internal factors include individual interests, talents, motivations, and career aspirations, whereas external factors encompass family support, economic conditions, social environment, and institutional reputation. From the perspective of educational consumer behavior, prospective students are viewed as individuals who evaluate various educational alternatives before making a final decision. (Kurnia & Deviyantoro, 2023). Therefore, the decision to select a higher education institution cannot be understood solely through a single factor; rather, it should be analyzed through the interrelationships among multiple factors that influence one another.

Students' interest constitutes one of the key factors influencing the choice of higher education. Interest refers to an individual's tendency to pay attention to and engage in particular fields that align with their abilities, needs, and personal aspirations. Within the context of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), students' interests develop through learning processes, habituation, and social interactions experienced throughout their educational journey. Students who possess a strong interest in pursuing higher education tend to be more proactive in seeking information and making informed decisions regarding higher education institutions that align with their career aspirations and future goals. (PUSPITASARI, 2016).

In addition to students' interests, family support plays a crucial role in the educational decision-making process of santri. Family support may take various forms, including emotional, financial, informational, and appraisal support, all of which help individuals feel valued, encouraged, and motivated to pursue further education. The family serves as the primary social environment in which individuals develop the values, attitudes, and motivations that shape their educational aspirations and future plans. Consequently, santri who receive strong family support tend to demonstrate greater confidence and preparedness in making decisions regarding higher education institution choice. (S. Z. Nasution & Purba, 2017).

On the other hand, *pesantren* culture also plays an important role in shaping students' mindsets and character in making educational choices. *Pesantren* culture refers to a system of values, norms, and practices that develops within the Islamic boarding school environment and is transmitted across generations. Values such as religiosity, discipline, simplicity, and respect for teachers constitute essential elements of students' daily lives. This culture not only contributes to character formation but also influences students' educational orientations and preferences in selecting higher education

institutions that are perceived as consistent with Islamic values and *pesantren* traditions. (Zuhriy, 2011).

From the perspective of Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura, individual behavior is shaped through processes of observation, imitation, and social interaction within the surrounding environment. This theory posits that a supportive social environment reinforces the development of behaviors, interests, and individual decision-making processes. In the context of this study, the *pesantren* environment and the family serve as important sources of social learning that influence the formation of students' interests and their decisions regarding higher education institution choice.

Several previous studies have examined the factors influencing higher education institution choice, including institutional reputation, educational costs, and family support. However, the majority of these studies have focused on students in general secondary education settings and have paid limited attention to the context of santri within Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) environments. Research (Mustopa et al., 2021) Previous research has highlighted the limited access to digital information among santri in the process of selecting higher education institutions, while Puspitasari (2016) focused primarily on santri's interest in pursuing higher education. In contrast to these earlier studies, the present study integrates students' interests, family support, and *pesantren* culture within a single structural model using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. The novelty of this study lies in examining *pesantren* culture as an intervening variable in the decision-making process of higher education institution choice among Madrasah Aliyah students.

Students' interests, family support, and *pesantren* culture jointly influence santri's decisions regarding higher education institution selection. Students' interests function as an internal motivational force that guides them in choosing academic programs or institutions aligned with their academic and non-academic aspirations. Family support, particularly from parents, provides emotional, financial, and social encouragement that strengthens students' intentions to pursue higher education. Meanwhile, *pesantren* culture, which instills values such as discipline, religiosity, and solidarity, shapes students' attitudes and mindsets, leading them to prefer higher education institutions that reflect the values and expectations of the *pesantren* community. These three factors interact dynamically and constitute an important foundation for santri's higher education decision-making process.

This study aims to analyze the influence of several factors on santri's decisions in selecting higher education institutions. Specifically, it examines how students' interests affect *pesantren* culture and the extent to which family support contributes to the formation of that culture. Furthermore, the study investigates the direct effects of students' interests and family support on higher education institution choice. In addition to these direct relationships, the study also explores the influence of *pesantren* culture itself on students' decisions regarding higher education institution selection. Moreover, this research examines the mediating role of *pesantren* culture by analyzing the indirect effects of students' interests and family support on higher education institution choice

through *pesantren* culture. By addressing these objectives, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the higher education decision-making process among santri.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design with an explanatory survey approach to analyze the influence of students' interests and family support on higher education institution choice, with *pesantren* culture serving as an intervening variable. The research was conducted at MAS Al-Muslimun Lhoksukon, North Aceh, Indonesia, as the institution represents a population of students who are at the stage of determining their educational pathways toward higher education. A quantitative approach was selected because it enables the objective and systematic measurement of relationships among variables through statistical analysis.

This study is grounded in Social Learning Theory proposed by Albert Bandura. The theory explains that individual behavior is shaped through processes of observation, social interaction, and habituation within social environments. In the context of this study, the family environment and *pesantren* culture are considered social factors that influence the development of students' interests and their decisions regarding higher education institution choice.

The study population consisted of 103 eleventh-grade students enrolled at MAS Al-Muslimun Lhoksukon. The sample was determined using a purposive sampling technique, taking into account respondents who were actively engaged in planning their higher education pathways. Based on the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error, a sample of 51 respondents was obtained.

Data were collected through questionnaires, observations, and documentation. The primary research instrument was a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire designed to measure the variables of students' interests, family support, *pesantren* culture, and higher education institution choice. The questionnaire items were developed based on indicators derived from previous studies. The Likert scale was employed to assess respondents' levels of agreement with each statement presented in the instrument.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM). Descriptive analysis was utilized to describe the characteristics of the research data, while PLS-SEM was employed to examine both direct and indirect relationships among the study variables. The PLS-SEM approach was selected because it is capable of testing complex structural models with relatively small sample sizes and does not require strict assumptions regarding the normality of data distribution. (Afandi et al., 2022; Roemintoyo, 2013; Santoso et al., 2025).

The measurement model (outer model) was evaluated through convergent validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's Alpha tests. Indicators were considered valid if they exhibited factor loadings greater than 0.70 and AVE values exceeding 0.50. Furthermore, constructs were deemed reliable when

both Composite Reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha values were above the threshold of 0.70. Subsequently, the structural model (inner model) was assessed using R-squared (R²) values, path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. Hypothesis testing was conducted through the bootstrapping procedure to examine the significance of both direct and indirect relationships among the study variables.(Safitri & Kartawinata, 2020; Taufik Irwansyah et al., 2024).

RESULTS

Analysis and Discussion

As part of the data screening procedure, the data obtained from the questionnaires were evaluated to identify and address potential inaccuracies. The screening process involved examining missing values, outliers, and data normality. The results indicated that the dataset contained neither missing values nor outliers. Data normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis statistics. Several skewness values exceeded the recommended threshold, indicating a slight deviation from normality.

Nevertheless, the study proceeded with the data analysis stage because it employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is particularly suitable for analyzing data that do not strictly satisfy the assumption of normal distribution. (Chun Won et al., 2017; Usakli & Rasoolimanesh, 2023).

Table 1. Analysis

	No	Missing	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness
PT 1	1	0	4.314	5.000	1.000	5.000	0.874	3.121	-1.580
PT 2	2	0	3.337	4.000	1.000	5.000	1.220	-0.888	-0.361
PT 3	3	0	4.059	4.000	2.000	5.000	0.725	-0.034	-0.410
PT 4	4	0	4.196	4.000	2.000	5.000	0.741	0.078	-0.638
PT 5	5	0	3.863	4.000	1.000	5.000	0.841	0.983	-0.545
PT 6	6	0	4.098	4.000	3.000	5.000	0.721	-1.056	-0.153
PT 7	7	0	3.196	4.000	1.000	5.000	1.172	-0.84	-0.397
PT 8	8	0	4.157	4.000	1.000	5.000	0.849	2.712	-1.305
PS 1	9	0	4.451	5.000	3.000	5.000	0.636	-0.405	-0.753
PS 2	10	0	4.490	5.000	3.000	5.000	0.668	-0.180	-0.981

PS 3	11	0	4.216	4.000	3.000	5.000	0.666	-0.749	-0.284
PS 4	12	0	4.000	4.000	2.000	5.000	0.741	0.551	-0.596
PS 5	13	0	4.039	4.000	3.000	5.000	0.740	-1.168	-0.064
PS 6	14	0	3.863	4.000	2.000	5.000	0.675	1.351	-0.697
PS 7	15	0	3.137	3.000	1.000	5.000	1.329	-1.116	-0.209
PS 8	16	0	4.176	4.000	2.000	5.000	0.733	0.124	-0.605
DK 1	17	0	4.392	5.000	2.000	5.000	0.769	0.499	-1.091
DK 2	18	0	4.392	5.000	3.000	5.000	0.769	-0.829	-0.25
DK 3	19	0	4.451	5.000	3.000	5.000	0.723	-0.459	-0.948
DK 4	20	0	3.098	3.000	1.000	5.000	1.459	-1.382	-0.176
DK 5	21	0	2.941	3.000	1.000	5.000	1.320	-1.173	0.112
DK 6	22	0	4.529	5.000	3.000	5.000	0.667	0.095	-1.131
DK 7	23	0	4.255	4.000	3.000	5.000	0.652	-0.690	-0.323
DK 8	24	0	4.216	4.000	3.000	5.000	0.723	-1.020	-0.361
DK 9	25	0	3.431	4.000	1.000	5.000	1.347	-1.016	-0.445
DK 10	26	0	4.431	5.000	3.000	5.000	0.693	-0.495	-0.838
BP 1	27	0	4.118	4.000	3.000	5.000	0.704	-0.959	-0.174
BP 2	28	0	4.098	4.000	3.000	5.000	0.634	-0.477	-0.086

BP 3	29	0	4.176	4.000	2.000	5.000	0.759	-0.157	-0.593
BP 4	30	0	3.804	4.000	2.000	5.000	0.971	-0.992	-0.251
BP 5	31	0	4.157	4.000	3.000	5.000	0.668	-0.744	-0.197
BP 6	32	0	4.098	4.000	3.000	5.000	0.693	-0.893	-0.137
BP 7	33	0	4.020	4.000	3.000	5.000	0.727	-1.099	-0.031
BP 8	34	0	4.059	4.000	3.000	5.000	0.752	-1.228	-0.100

Outer Model (Validitas-Reliabilitas)

The evaluation of the outer model was conducted to ensure that the indicators associated with each construct demonstrated adequate validity and reliability. The results revealed that all measurement items exhibited factor loadings above 0.70, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, suggesting that the latent variables explained more than 50% of the variance in their respective indicators.

Reliability assessment, as measured by Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha, also produced values above 0.70 for all constructs, confirming a high level of internal consistency. Therefore, all constructs in the proposed model were considered both valid and reliable, making them suitable for further analysis in the structural model (inner model) evaluation stage. (Fauzi, 2022; M. I. Nasution et al., 2020).

Table 2. Validitas-Reliabilitas

Variabel	Items	Loading	Alpha	CR	AVE
Budaya Pesantren Z	BP 1	0.786	0.916	0.933	0.667
	BP 2	0.855			
	BP 3	0.777			
	BP 5	0.768			
	BP 6	0.827			
	BP 7	0.892			
	BP 8	0.803			

Dukungan Keluarga X2	DK 1	0.721	0.895	0.916	0.610
	DK 10	0.722			
	DK 2	0.850			
	DK 3	0.776			
	DK 6	0.843			
	DK 7	0.749			
	DK 8	0.796			
Peminatan Santri X1	PS 1	0.788	0.796	0.865	0.616
	PS 2	0.779			
	PS 3	0.781			
	PS 5	0.792			
Pemilihan Perguruan Tinggi Y	PT 1	0.886	0.648	0.850	0.739
	PT 4	0.832			

Inner Model (Validity Testing)

The evaluation of the inner model was conducted to examine the relationships among constructs within the structural model. The analysis revealed that the R-squared (R^2) values of the endogenous variables ranged from moderate to substantial levels, indicating that the exogenous variables were able to explain a considerable proportion of the variance in the dependent variables.

The significance of the structural paths was assessed using the bootstrapping procedure. The results demonstrated that most of the hypothesized relationships exhibited t-statistic values greater than 1.96 and p-values below 0.05, indicating statistically significant relationships among the constructs. (Kinasih et al., 2025; Maylinda Wijayanti et al., 2025).

Table 3. Validity Testing

	OS	SM	SD	T Statistics	P Values
Pesantren Culture Z → Higher Education Institution Y	0.273	0.245	0.195	1.400	0.162
Family Support X2 → Budaya Pesantren Z	0.387	0.381	0.174	2.232	0.026
Family Support X2 → Higher Education Institution Y	0.186	0.197	0.183	1.019	0.309
Students' Interest X1 → Pesantren Culture Z	0.399	0.416	0.164	2.431	0.015
Santri Interests X1 → Higher Education Institution Y	0.218	0.250	0.200	1.088	0.277

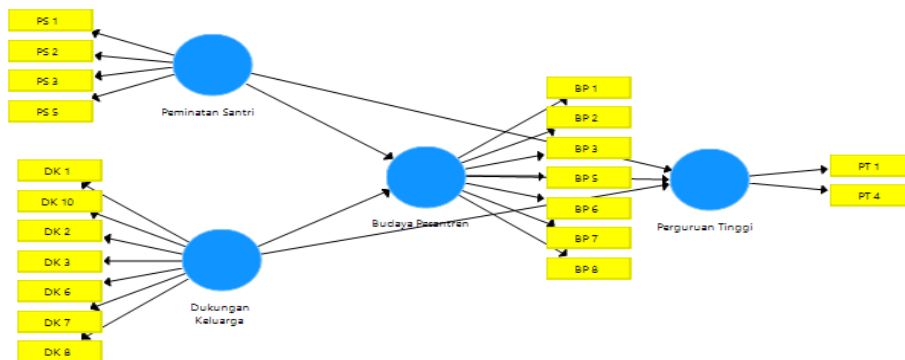


Figure 1. Screenshot of the SEM-PLS Test Results

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the SEM-PLS analysis indicate that students' interests and family support have a positive and significant effect on *pesantren* culture. However, students' interests, family support, and *pesantren* culture do not have a significant effect on higher education institution choice. Furthermore, *pesantren* culture was not found to mediate the relationship between students' interests and higher education institution choice, nor the relationship between family support and higher education institution choice. These findings suggest that social and cultural factors play a more substantial role in shaping the internalization of *pesantren* values than in determining students' final decisions regarding higher education institution selection.

H₁: Hypothesis Analysis of the Effect of Students' Interests on *Pesantren* Culture

The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that students' interests have a positive and statistically significant effect on *pesantren* culture, as evidenced by a t-statistic value of 2.431 (> 1.96) and a p-value of 0.015 (< 0.05). These findings suggest that higher levels of students' interest are associated with stronger engagement in *pesantren* culture.

This result indicates that students' interests are not merely personal attributes but are also developed through social interaction and habituation processes within the *pesantren* environment. From the perspective of Social Learning Theory proposed by Albert Bandura, a supportive social environment reinforces individuals' engagement with prevailing values and cultural norms. Students with higher levels of interest tend to participate more actively in religious activities, learning processes, and social interactions within the *pesantren*, thereby strengthening the internalization of *pesantren* culture.

These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Puspitasari (2016), which reported that students' interests significantly influence their involvement in educational activities and self-development programs within the *pesantren* environment. Therefore, students' interests can be regarded as an important factor in strengthening the formation of *pesantren* culture as a living system of values embedded in students' daily lives.

H₂: Hypothesis Analysis of the Effect of Family Support on *Pesantren* Culture

The results indicate that family support has a positive and statistically significant effect on *pesantren* culture, as demonstrated by a t-statistic value of 2.232 (> 1.96) and a p-value of 0.026 (< 0.05). This finding suggests that higher levels of family support contribute to stronger internalization of *pesantren* culture among students.

In this study, family support encompasses emotional, moral, and material support that facilitates students' adaptation to life in the *pesantren*. From the perspective of Social Learning Theory, the family represents the primary social environment in which individuals develop behaviors, values, and habits. When the values instilled by the family are aligned with those promoted by the *pesantren*, students are more likely to accept, internalize, and practice *pesantren* values in their daily lives.

These findings are consistent with the study conducted by (S. Z. Nasution & Purba, 2017) These findings are consistent with previous studies, which suggest that family

support plays an important role in enhancing individuals' motivation and adaptation within educational environments. Therefore, the family serves not only as a source of educational support but also as a reinforcing agent in the internalization of *pesantren* culture among santri.

H3: Hypothesis Analysis of the Effect of Students' Interests on Higher Education Institution Choice

The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that students' interests do not have a statistically significant effect on higher education institution choice, as evidenced by a t-statistic value of 1.088 (< 1.96) and a p-value of 0.277 (> 0.05). These findings suggest that santri's decisions regarding higher education institution selection are not determined solely by their personal interests but are also influenced by other factors, such as family economic conditions, access to information, and social considerations. Within the *pesantren* context, educational decisions are often shaped by family guidance, social environments, and teachers' recommendations rather than by students' individual preferences alone. This finding differs from previous studies that have emphasized the significant role of students' interests in influencing educational choices and career-related decision-making processes (Puspitasari et al., 2024) This finding contrasts with previous studies that reported a significant influence of students' interests on educational decision-making. The discrepancy in findings may be attributed to differences in respondent characteristics and research settings.

H4: Hypothesis Analysis of the Effect of Family Support on Higher Education Institution Choice

The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that family support does not have a statistically significant effect on higher education institution choice, as evidenced by a t-statistic value of 1.019 (< 1.96) and a p-value of 0.309 (> 0.05). This finding suggests that family support does not directly determine santri's decisions regarding higher education institution selection.

These results imply that educational decisions among santri are influenced not only by family factors but also by other considerations, such as the *pesantren* environment, economic constraints, and access to information about higher education institutions. In some cases, families may provide moral support without being directly involved in the educational decision-making process.

The findings differ from previous studies that reported a significant influence of family support on children's educational decisions. This discrepancy may be attributed to the distinctive characteristics of *pesantren* culture, which encourage students to develop greater independence in determining their educational pathways.

H5: Hypothesis Analysis of the Effect of *Pesantren* Culture on Higher Education Institution Choice

The results indicate that *pesantren* culture does not have a statistically significant effect on higher education institution choice, as demonstrated by a t-statistic value of 1.400 (< 1.96) and a p-value of 0.162 (> 0.05). This finding suggests that *pesantren*

culture does not directly determine santri's decisions regarding higher education institution selection.

Although *pesantren* culture contributes to the development of students' religious character and discipline, decisions regarding higher education institution choice appear to be influenced more strongly by practical considerations, such as educational costs, campus location, employment prospects, and the availability of academic programs. This finding suggests that students' educational orientations are becoming increasingly rational and adaptive to future needs.

The results further indicate that the internalization of *pesantren* values is not necessarily associated with higher education institution choice. Therefore, *pesantren* culture appears to play a greater role in character development than in determining students' choices of higher education institutions.

H6: Hypothesis Analysis of the Indirect Effect of Students' Interests on Higher Education Institution Choice through *Pesantren* Culture

The analysis revealed that *pesantren* culture does not mediate the relationship between students' interests and higher education institution choice. This finding can be attributed to the non-significant relationship between *pesantren* culture and higher education institution choice, as indicated by a p-value of 0.162 (> 0.05).

These findings suggest that students' interests in pursuing higher education develop largely at the individual level and are not entirely shaped by *pesantren* culture. Although students demonstrate strong engagement with *pesantren* cultural values and practices, their decisions regarding higher education institution selection continue to be influenced by other practical and personal considerations.

Accordingly, the results indicate that *pesantren* culture functions primarily as a mechanism for value and character formation rather than as a mediating variable in the higher education decision-making process.

H7: Hypothesis Analysis of the Indirect Effect of Family Support on Higher Education Institution Choice through *Pesantren* Culture

The analysis demonstrated that *pesantren* culture does not mediate the relationship between family support and higher education institution choice. This result is attributable to the non-significant relationship between *pesantren* culture and higher education institution choice, as reflected in a p-value of 0.162 (> 0.05).

These findings indicate that the relationship between family support and students' educational decisions is more direct and does not operate through the internalization of *pesantren* culture. In practice, families tend to prioritize economic considerations, educational accessibility, and future opportunities rather than *pesantren* cultural values when determining higher education options for their children.

Therefore, *pesantren* culture was not found to function as an effective intervening variable in explaining the relationship between family support and higher education institution choice. These findings further suggest that students' educational decisions are

shaped by multiple interrelated and multidimensional factors.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the influence of students' interests and family support on higher education institution choice, with *pesantren* culture serving as an intervening variable. Based on the results of the PLS-SEM analysis, several important findings were obtained.

First, students' interests and family support were found to have positive and statistically significant effects on *pesantren* culture. This finding indicates that both internal factors, represented by students' interests, and external factors, represented by family support, play an important role in strengthening the internalization of *pesantren* cultural values among santri.

Second, students' interests, family support, and *pesantren* culture were not found to have statistically significant effects on higher education institution choice. This result suggests that santri's decisions regarding higher education institution selection are not directly determined by these three factors. Instead, such decisions may be influenced by other considerations, including economic conditions, access to information, and various practical factors.

Third, *pesantren* culture was not found to mediate the relationships between students' interests and higher education institution choice or between family support and higher education institution choice. This result can be attributed to the absence of a significant relationship between *pesantren* culture and higher education institution choice, which prevented the formation of a significant mediation pathway.

Overall, the findings indicate that students' interests and family support play a more substantial role in shaping *pesantren* culture than in determining the final decision regarding higher education institution choice. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to consider additional variables that may provide a more comprehensive explanation of higher education institution selection, such as economic factors, access to information, and perceptions of future career prospects.

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