



## Perceptions of Early Childhood Parents Towards Integrated Islamic Kindergarten Educational Institutions

Qotrun Nada Nafi'ah<sup>1</sup>, Amina Rosa Mumtaza Rafiq<sup>2</sup>, Youssef Shawky Elbehairy<sup>3</sup>

Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta<sup>1</sup>

Yangzou University<sup>2</sup>

Tanta University<sup>3</sup>

[gotrunnadanafiah998@gmail.com](mailto:gotrunnadanafiah998@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

This study aims to determine the perspective of parents on integrated Islamic educational institutions in the midst of the rise of Educational Institutions that are currently competing to carry out integrative learning. This research uses an exploratory case study method with a qualitative approach digging deeper into how parents' perceptions of integrated Islamic educational institutions and the factors of issues that build perceptions. The data source used is 8 early age parents who live in Plembutan Village. The data collection technique used is the in-depth interview technique. Data analysis uses three stages, namely data reduction, presenting data, and drawing conclusions. The result of this research is that an integrated Islamic educational institution is seen as an educational institution with a good curriculum because it can combine religious science and science, is classified as elite, is synonymous with a group, and attracts the attention of parents enough to make it an alternative in choosing the best educational institution for their children. The impact of this research is expected to be an illustration for educational institutions, both integrated Islamic institutions and other institutions to improve the quality of education based on the results of parents' views.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood, Islamic Kindergarten, Parents.

### Introduction

Education is an important effort in the movement to change a nation to a better level. Education is also seen as a preparatory step to form a superior generation that has competitiveness, character, and has great potential to improve the quality of a nation (Wayan et al., 2020, p. 9). Education is also referred to as a step to realize the purpose of alenia IV in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, namely "Educating the Life of the Nation". This ideal needs to be realized, because an intelligent nation will not be easily brought down.

Everything that is done consciously with the intention of developing potential in the child can be categorized in educational activities. Education can already begin from the moment the child is just born (Seniati Sutarmin, 2014). Children who are in the age of 0-6 years are actually known to be in a golden age (Mayar et al., 2019, p. 34). The development of the child's brain reaches 80% with unlimited absorption. It would be unfortunate if the golden age of children is simply missed without special treatment for children (Rita Kurnia, 2013, p. 79). It is

necessary to have the right encouragement or stimulus according to the stage of the child's age so that all aspects of the child's development develop perfectly. Therefore, the selection of educational institutions is very important for children (Dwiyanti et al., 2019). Because what the child gets during his golden age will affect his life process in the future. One of the determinants of the quality of child growth and development is education and the environment in which children grow up (Ministry et al., n.d., p. 378).

Six aspects of early childhood development need to be developed simultaneously. Because basically according to Gardner children have intelligence more than one potential that can be developed (Marwiyati & Istiningsih, 2020, p. 136). It cannot be just one aspect, or some aspects that are developed. Currently the institution of Early Childhood Education (ECCE) is considered important because it has a special role in encouraging the development of the child. Both aspects of cognitive, social-emotional, physical-motor development, art, language, to the moral-religious development of children. In this day and age, there are many institutions that offer a variety of learning models that support aspects of child development. Early childhood education institutions are not only formal in nature. There are educational institutions of a non-formal, even informal nature. All three of them have the same goal, which is to help develop aspects of child development so that children grow up to be competent individuals. Each educational institution highlights its own advantages. There are institutions that highlight their superiority in some areas of child development with various methods, some even offer unique class concepts. The offer provided by the school is an option for parents to be able to determine aspects in the child that want to be further developed (Suyadi, 2016). However, despite the advantages highlighted, early childhood institutions still develop learning plans with standards that cover all aspects of child development (Ahidin, 2019, p. 145).

One of the institutions that currently attracts the attention of the public is an integrated Islamic educational institution. Integrated Islamic educational institutions or often called IT are institutions that are considered the latest breakthroughs to bring fresh air to the unrest of Muslims who are worried about science alone which is not taught enough to children. The unrest is felt to arise because of the opinion that the current difficulty of Muslims in facing the challenges of modern life because it always separates between religious science and general science (Tajab, 2017). Therefore, the emergence of religious-based educational institutions is currently an interesting phenomenon, both in the world of national and international education (Amrullah, 2015, p. 6). Integrated education itself is a type of combining science education with religious education (Rojii et al., 2019, p. 2). Currently, integrated Islamic institutions are available at various levels of education. Starting from TKIT, SDIT, SMPIT, to SMAIT.

Integrated education is an education that refers to *an integrated curriculum* (Kurniawan, 2016, p. 95). The integrated curriculum itself is an approach that eliminates the boundaries between subjects and organizes lessons to be continuous. Education by combining Islamic concepts is considered the best method to instill Islamic values in children (Suyatno, 1970). Because children will be accustomed to applying the teachings of Islam not only at home, but

every day includes learning activities at school. Basically, the concept of thinking at the beginning of the establishment of an integrated Islamic school is with the aim of fostering students to become people who are pious, intelligent, and have a noble character, and the most important thing is to have creativity to solve problems and give *maslahat* for Muslims in the future (Seniati Sutarmin, 2014)(Suyatno, 2015).

Integrated Islamic schools themselves have characteristics that are certainly different from schools or madrasas in general. The specific characteristics highlighted by integrated Islamic educational institutions are (1) based on Islamic philosophical, (2) integrating the curriculum with Islamic values, (3) applying and developing learning methods to optimize the child's learning process, (4) forming character with the *uswatun hasanah* method, (5) prioritizing benefits and eliminating prosperity, (6) involving parents and the community in achieving educational goals, (7) prioritizing Islamic values with the school community, (8) welcoming a culture of care, recessive, coherent, neat, healthy, and beautiful, (9) ensuring that all school activities are oriented towards quality quality, (10) cultivating professionalism among educators and educators (Fatkuroji, 2012, p. 260). Integrated Islamic schools try to strengthen Islamic values in terms of integrated into aspects of educational activities in schools. Not only applied to activities in the classroom, but also implemented in child habituation (Rojii et al., 2019, p. 6). As written in Dekdikbud (1996: 3) this model is most suitable to be applied to early childhood, but is also appropriate for educational institutions at the elementary, junior high school/MTs, to high school/MA levels (Kurniawan, 2016). To maintain the quality of integrated Islamic institutions, an Integrated Slam School Network (JSIT) was formed that welcomes the high principles of Islam, Effectiveness, and Quality (Agustinova, 2015).

Departing from the above presentation, marasa researchers are interested in the perspective of institutions among the community, especially parents of early childhood in Plembutan villages. Researchers are interested in knowing what kind of paradigm is developing among the community regarding the existence of integrated Islamic institutions, especially in the Gunungkidul area. The results of this study are expected to be used as a reference and valid data source for future studies. This research is a research with qualitative descriptive methods. A study that presents data based on the results of data processing interviews, observations and documentation. The approach is carried out using a case study approach. The object of this study was early childhood parents in Plembutan Village, Playen, Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta (Sugiyono, 2013).

The existence of an integrated Islamic educational institution has often been heard by parents of early childhood in Plembutan Village, of the five sources met, all of them claimed to have known about the institution. This makes it easier for researchers to delve deeper into their opinions about the integrated institution.

## Literature Review

Before conducting this study, the authors conducted several studies on previous studies with relevant cases. Some related research that the author then uses as a reference is Sabdah's research in 2021 which discusses parents' perceptions of Islamic educational institutions. The article provides several descriptions of researchers related to parents' attitudes, parental motivations, and parents' expectations of Islamic educational institutions. From this study, the author can conclude that parents are actually interested in the concept of religious education offered by Islamic educational institutions, but there is a low sense of trust in Islamic educational institutions to many parents who prefer general education for their children (Sabdah, 2021). This research has similarities with the research that the author will do, which discusses the perceptions of parents, in this study the author is also interested in digging deeper into how parents respond to institutions with Islamic curriculum and general science in a balanced manner but focusing on early childhood level educational institutions.

In addition to Sabda's research, researchers also made a study by Hamidah Nur Vitasari which raised the title of parents' motivation to send children to Islamic-based schools. This research gives many relevant images to the authors regarding the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of parents towards Islamic educational institutions. From this study, the author got an overview of the expectations of parents who have combined their children in Islamic educational institutions, including underlining the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of parents, which has more or less been answered by integrated Islamic education that carries an integrated curriculum (Vitasari, 2017). The conclusion of the study was also corroborated by the results of a study owned by Nur Hadi and Saino (2017) which raised the theme of parental motivation factors in choosing an integrated Islam kindergarten educational institution. From this study, the biggest factor is the product factor which is in the form of a curriculum program that is attractive to parents (Hadi et al., 2015). In this study, the author also got an idea of many parents who make integrated Islamic educational institutions as a solution to concerns about education. Both studies were conducted on integrated Islamic educational institutions that have urban environments, this then makes the author interested in knowing how the perception of integrated Islamic institutions from the point of view of parents in rural areas. This also makes the difference between the previous research and the research that the author will do. Based on the searches that the researchers conducted, the research that the authors will do is different from previous studies so it is feasible for further research.

## Methods

The research method used in this study is an exploratory case study conducted using a qualitative approach. This research model is used to obtain in-depth data on the phenomenon to be studied, namely about how the Islamic education curriculum is integrated from the point of view of parents of early childhood. In this study, as many as 8 parents were respondents to the study. To maintain confidentiality, the respondent's identity will be disguised into the initials R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, and R8. The criteria for respondents in this study were parents in Plembutan village who had children aged 0 to 7 years.

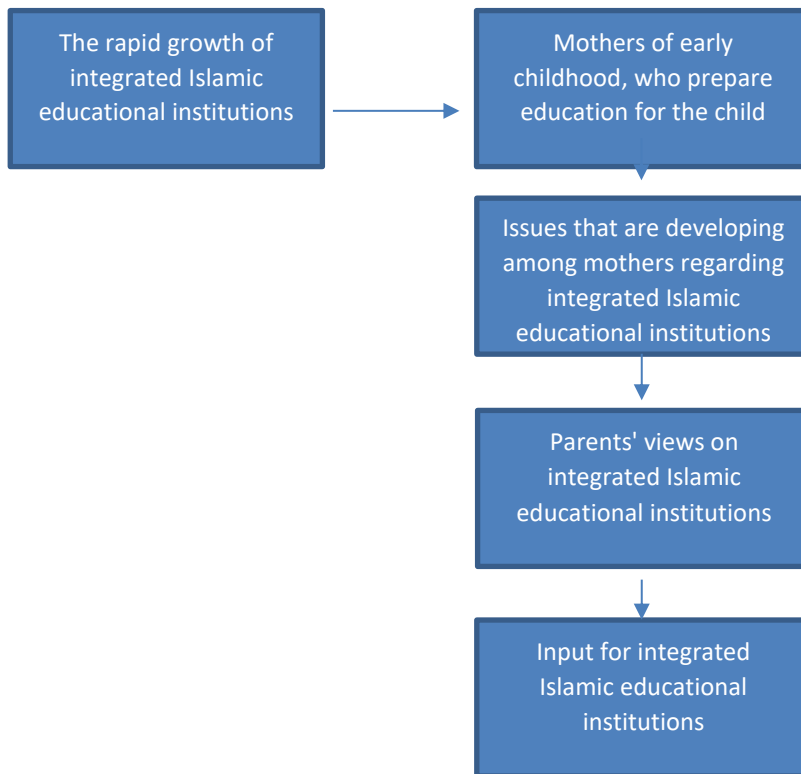
The data collection method is carried out with structured interview techniques that are carried out in depth. The data collection instrument uses observation sheets and interview instruments. As for data analysis techniques, the author uses analysis techniques that start from data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and end with drawing conclusions. The specifications of the respondents selected are parents living in rural areas, so this research can be used for educational institutions, especially integrated Islamic educational institutions, how parents perceive the educational curriculum offered.

Table 1. Informant Data

| <b>No.</b> | <b>Initials</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Work</b>           | <b>Recent education</b> |
|------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1.         | R1              | 35         | Kindergarten Teachers | S1                      |
| 2.         | R2              | 40         | Farmer                | SMA                     |
| 3.         | R3              | 32         | Employee              | SMA                     |
| 4.         | R4              | 30         | Farmer                | SMA                     |
| 5.         | R5              | 33         | Employee              | S1                      |
| 6.         | R6              | 30         | Housewives            | S1                      |
| 7.         | R7              | 25         | Housewives            | SMA                     |
| 8.         | R8              | 21         | Housewives            | SMA                     |

To dig deeper into early childhood parents' perceptions of integrated Islamic educational institutions researchers asked several questions related to this, including how they responded to the integrated Islamic educational institutions they knew about, the extent to which they knew about the institution, what issues they heard about the institution, and closed with the question of whether they were interested in integrated Islamic educational institutions for men's education Her daughter. The flow of the research carried out is listed in the figure below.

Figure 1.



The expected impact of this research can later be used for relevant institutions to improve quality while answering issues in society.

### Result and Discussion

Based on the results of the author's search before conducting further research, based on research through google maps, there are more than 10 integrated Islamic early childhood education institutions in the Gunungkidul area. The marketing efforts carried out by the integrated Islamic institution in Gunungkidul are considered to be good enough so that parents who are tidanggal in areas that are quite far away know the existence of the institution. One of the respondents said that the advertising of institutions in strategic places is quite helpful in increasing their knowledge. However, the installation of baleho is not the only reason for the integrated Islamic institution to be discussed by the people in Plembutan Village. Word of mouth continues to run in the community, both through in-person conversations and chats through social media groups such as *WhatsApp* and *Facebook*. This is not surprising, *digital marketing* is currently still considered the fastest disseminator of information (Rapitasari & Rapitasari, 2016)

The information obtained by parents, whether through advertising boards, word of mouth, or official web advertisements, unknowingly builds their own perceptions for parents. Parents naturally capture the characteristics of the unified islamic institution. When viewed from the

understanding of integrated Islam itself, all respondents admit that the first thing parents think of is the concept of learning that breathes Islam.

One of the respondents explained his knowledge of the integrated Islamic institution in detail and more clearly based on experience because one of his daughters had entered the integrated Islamic institution first. He concluded that an integrated curriculum as far as he understood it was an institution that had a curriculum blending science and religion subject matter. This was seen as good and quite attractive to parents by the respondents.

The thing that is considered interesting by parents in addition to their learning model that applies a lot of Islamic values is the *full-day school* system. *Fullday school* is considered a new breakthrough by giving children more learning time. This makes it easier to achieve the goal of implementing the development of intellectual (fikriyah), emotional (ruhiyah) and physical (jasadiyah) potential between schools, parents, and society (Amrullah, 2015, p. 8; Hidayat et al., 2020, p. 9) Children in schools are provided with good facilities and an environment that supports the development of students. This is also intended so that children are not bored and continue to feel happy to be in school (Hidayat et al., 2020). Many parents think that the cultivation of religious morals in a child cannot be instantaneous and should begin as early as possible. The cultivation of the habit of breathing Islam that begins when the child is still at an early age will imprint and shape his person as an adult. No wonder many integrated Islamic schools program *fullday schools* in order to optimize the process of instillation of Islam in children. The application of *fullday school* is considered beneficial for urban communities, but the paradigm is slightly different from the perception of some respondents, 2 respondents think (Seniati Sutarmin, 2014)*fullday school* is too much for early childhood.

*“... it seems too heavy for the child to study all day. (excerpt of interview with R2)*

However, other respondents actually supported the concept of *fullday*. Respondents said the concept was good, for several reasons. One of them is because the child's learning environment is clearer, and they believe that the child's learning hours have been adjusted to the needs of the child. This is supported by the concept of a learning environment, namely basically children actually need an environment that fully supports their development, while the school environment is the first environment to support child development if in the family environment the child does not get good stimulation (Suyatno, 1970). After all, integrated Islamic schools not only prioritize cognitive development, but also focus on shaping children's habits, children's morals, and also providing a conducive environment so that during the planting period children can be more focused (Fatkuroji, 2012, p. 6).

Longer school time with a variety of activities and more complete facilities directly makes not a few parents think that tuition fees are more expensive than kindergartens in general. This assumption was approved by all respondents. Respondents think that for children in early childhood, the money spent is too much. One of the respondents added to the information he got that the registration fee for entering an integrated Islamic institution had matched the price

of elementary and even junior high school children. One of the respondents said that integrated Islamic educational institutions are not targeted at the lower middle class.

From the results of the interview, it can be seen that there is a stigma of "elite" in integrated Islamic educational institutions among rural communities. The stigma comes not only in terms of long learning time and causes the price to be paid is not cheap. However, this stigma also arises because from the academic side only the best students can be accepted as students, as well as from the side of selecting teaching staff, only someone who has certain qualifications can join as teaching staff. Not to mention the facilities that support school programs such as libraries, computer rooms, mosques, and complete sports facilities for children (Amrullah, 2015, p. 11). This is felt to be possible in several locations with a high level of public interest in integrated Islamic educational institutions. The number of registrations that exceed the learning quota is normal if selection is needed at the registration stage and not just about who is the fastest to register.

The number of integrated Islamic institutions in Gunungkidul, tarutama in Playen District is still relatively minimal. The considerable mileage between home and school also affects the consideration of parents to choose an educational institution. The closest distance between the integrated Islamic institution and Plembutan Village is the closest to being reached for ten minutes. Its remote location is a reason for parents.

In addition to some of the information above, there is also another perspective on integrated Islamic educational institutions related to upholding Islamic values in educational activities, of course, it is a concern for parents. The number of diverse Islamic teachings in Indonesia is one side that needs to be considered by parents. Parents think that the Islamic teachings instilled in children must be in accordance with the values they have applied so far. Differences in the perspective of practicing Islamic law will be fatal if instilled early in children.

The statement made by respondents regarding the issue of teachings that do not match what they uphold is one of the real concerns. The existence of community sanctions because of the circulation of stigma inevitably helps shape the perception of parents' thinking. In fact, basically what is written on the principle of an integrated Islamic school states that Islamic learning is still sourced from the Qur'an and hadith (Suyatno, 2015). However, respondents realized that the clarity of the foundation and the teachings of Islam depend on the foundation that covers it, so as not to generalize the assessment of all integrated Islamic educational institutions.

From the various perceptions that have been conveyed by the above information, it then raises new questions for researchers. Researchers are interested in digging deeper into whether parents are actually interested in the model of integrated Islamic educational institutions, especially for parents living in Plembutan village.



### *Interesting Curriculum*

Integrated Islamic school (IT) institutions in the Gunungkidul area are still relatively few. However, its existence has become a hot topic among the people. Based on the results of interviews conducted with parents of early childhood, all agreed that education with an integrated Islamic model is an excellent education for child development. Because the provision of science alone is not enough. Religious science cannot be ruled out casually. The two should go hand in hand. And education with an integrated Islamic model is the answer to this problem. It also has an impact on the personal development of the child which must be formed as early as possible to make him a potential full person with a character according to Islamic morals.

Respondents agreed and believed that children attending integrated Islamic educational institutions had better religious knowledge than children attending regular kindergartens. Some of the respondents also witnessed for themselves the differences in the morals of students in TKIT compared to children in their environment. This difference is believed to be the result of a combination of integrated curriculum and also habituation applied in schools. The respondents agreed that this integrated Islamic curriculum was labeled as the best school institution curriculum.

### *Fullday School With Abundant Material Weight*

The application of *fullday school* in learning activities is not viewed positively by some people. There were still respondents who agreed, and there were also respondents who complained about the program. Both groups certainly have reasons that can be considered. For support groups, the application of *fullday school* thinks that *fullday school* is a good method to annify and shape Islamic character in children. A school environment that has been designed in such a way will quickly shape children in accordance with the purpose of an islamic integrated school, namely instilling a person who has the character of the Quran and hadith.

However, it is different from the group that thinks *full-day school* is not appropriately applied to early childhood. Children need a lot of time to play and explore the environment in which they live. So the application of *fullday school* will reduce the intensity of children exploring with their curves. Children also feel that it is too hard to accept a lot of learning materials at a young age. Some respondents think that to teach religious knowledge to children can be through the landfill program in mosques around the house, although the results are not as good as the programs offered by integrated Islamic schools, but this is considered better than a full day at school.

### *Stigma of "Elite" Schools*

There are several reasons that make IT institutions seen as institutions with the label "elite" among the public, especially respondents in this study who live in rural areas. The stigma stems from the *fullday* program which is considered as one of the factors that cost a lot of money to be paid for the program. But that's not all. The stigma of elite schools also arises due to the

large number of enthusiasts from the upper middle class as well as the completeness of facilities that are indeed provided to support children's development.

Some schools exist that provide many conditions for new learners. this makes the stigma "difficult" to penetrate school enrollment. Even among educators, integrated Islamic schools have more qualification requirements than the requirements for recruiting new teachers in other institutions.

### Synonymous With Certain Groups

There are many sentences spoken that indirectly express how much concern parents have about it. The rise of deviant proselytizing which is said to be a warm "theorist regeneration" among the people of Gunungkidul is one of the causes of concerns about the views of early childhood parents. Basically, the concept of integrated Islam is by practicing Islamic values derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. However, the variety of interpretations that cause the existence of several groups or can be called jama'ah islamiyah, makes parents feel that they have to be as active as possible. Because the habituation of Islamic sharia teachings that have been instilled and taught from early childhood will be more difficult to overcome if there is a misalignment between the Islamic sharia ideology implemented by parents and what is taught by teachers.

The issue that develops in society related to the existence of elements of proselytizing carried out by certain groups makes parents doubtful. The sanctions obtained do not only come from the family, but also come from the surrounding community. The existence of bigotry recognized by one of the speakers made most parents of early childhood need to conduct a re-survey of the foundation that houses the school. Prior to the explanation given by one of the respondents who had experience in including his son in an integrated Islamic institution, the respondent considered that all integrated Islamic school institutions were shaded by the same foundation. However, despite the issues and perceptions they have, all respondents said they were interested in the integrated curriculum offered and developed by integrated Islamic educational institutions. Because then children will develop in a balanced manner, in addition to science, religious science is also considered.

### Conclusion

Early childhood parents' assessment of integrated Islamic educational institutions falls into the positive category. This is due to several factors, such as an interesting curriculum because it combines science and religious science which is very well given to children. However, there are several issues that are factors that shape perceptions in early childhood parents, namely school fees that tend to be more expensive, longer school time (*fullday school*), a long distance from home because indeed the integrated Islamic institution in Gunungkidul is

still relatively small, and finally there are concerns about the incompatibility of Islamic value teachings applied in the institution.

There are several suggestions that researchers want to give, the first is advice for integrated Islamic educational institutions to consider the public's perception of educational institutions. The second advice for parents of early childhood, education is an important long-term investment for the child, should distance and cost cannot be used as an excuse for the future of the child.

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