



# Instagram Media Exposure and Parents' School Choice Decisions: Evidence from an Islamic Primary School

Dewi Septiani<sup>1</sup>, Rani Ade Saputri<sup>2</sup>, Veranus Sidharta<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Faculty of Communication and Language, Bina Sarana Informatika University, Indonesia

Corresponding email: [dewisepindewi@gmail.com](mailto:dewisepindewi@gmail.com)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54099/aijbs.v6i1.1818>

## ARTICLE INFO

Research Paper

### Article history:

Received: 15 February 2026

Revised: 14 April 2026

Accepted: 8 May 2026

**Keywords:** Decision-Making, Instagram, Islamic Primary School, School Choice

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effect of Instagram media exposure on parents' school-choice decisions in the context of an Islamic primary school. **Purpose** – This study seeks to analyze whether exposure to a school's official Instagram account significantly influences how parents assess, compare, and ultimately choose a school for their children. **Methodology** – A quantitative explanatory design was employed to test the relationship between Instagram media exposure (independent variable) and parents' school choice decisions (dependent variable). Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale from **104 valid respondents**, consisting of parents or guardians who had accessed, viewed, or followed the official Instagram account of MI PKP JIS and were involved in selecting a school for their children. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, and simple linear regression. **Findings** – Instagram media exposure has a positive and statistically significant effect on parents' school choice decisions. **R-square of 0.492**, showing that Instagram media exposure explains **49.2%** of the variance in parents' school choice decisions. **Value** – This study highlights Instagram as an important element in the communication ecology of contemporary Islamic primary education, functioning not only as a promotional medium but also as a source of information, visibility, symbolic representation, and parental interpretation in the school choice process.

*This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has transformed the way educational institutions communicate with the public. While schools previously relied on brochures, in-person visits, and interpersonal recommendations, institutional communication is now increasingly shifting to social media platforms that enable rapid, visual, and interactive information distribution. This shift is significant because parents are no longer merely passive recipients of information, but rather seekers, selectors, and interpreters of educational information in the digital environment. Recent studies show that social media has become a crucial space for parents to seek parenting information, build shared knowledge, and develop beliefs before making decisions related to their children (Mertens et al., 2024; Onishi et al., 2024; Eldeeb et al., 2025).



In the educational context, this shift has made social media not merely a promotional channel, but part of the school's communication ecology. Schools utilize social media to continuously showcase programs, student activities, achievements, institutional values, and school culture. Family engagement is also increasingly understood as part of broader educational communication, no longer limited to formal meetings or one-way announcements. Recent research shows that school-family communication is expanding beyond traditional newsletters and memos, with social media serving as a medium that broadens public participation, visibility, and perceptions of educational institutions (Hands et al., 2025; Bessant, 2024). Thus, schools' digital presence can influence how parents identify, compare, and evaluate school options.

Among various platforms, Instagram holds a particularly strategic position due to its reliance on visual power, concise narratives, and high interactivity. These characteristics make Instagram effective for building audience attention, emotion, trust, and engagement. Recent research in communications and marketing indicates that visual elements in social media can enhance message diagnosticity, shape perceptions of quality, and drive decision intentions. Social presence cues in photos, disclosure strategies, and specific visual configurations have been shown to influence users' attitudes toward brands and their intentions to act (Poirier et al., 2024; Saternus et al., 2024; Gurung et al., 2025). In a broader context, social media has also been shown to play an important role in decision-making, as users consult it before making choices, especially when decisions involve uncertainty and the evaluation of many alternatives (Macías Urrego et al., 2024).

Educational literature also shows that digital communication contributes to brand image formation and enrollment intention. Studies in higher education have found that interactive, transparent, and authentic social media communication is positively related to brand preference and enrollment intention. This finding confirms that educational institution choices are increasingly influenced by the institution's presence in the digital space rather than by formal reputation or administrative information alone. Furthermore, research on social media marketing in Islamic educational institutions shows that platforms such as Instagram and Facebook can be important tools for building the institution's visibility and positioning among potential users (Juhaidi, 2024; Li et al., 2025). Although much of the research has been conducted in higher education, the communication logic is relevant to elementary education, as parents also evaluate schools based on their image, alignment with values, and ease of access to the information provided by the institution.

At the same time, choosing a school is a complex process. Parents' choices are not determined by a single factor, but rather by a combination of academic quality, security, institutional values, social composition, future risks, and perceptions of their child's well-being. Studies on school choice show that parents weigh schools through different strategies depending on social class, location, economic crises, and children's needs. Research in Bangladesh, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Lebanon, and the special education context in the UK demonstrates that school choice is an evaluative process fraught with social, emotional, and structural considerations, rather than simply a neutral, rational decision (Ogawa et al., 2025; Pusztai et al., 2023; Bosáková, 2025; Al Khalili, 2025; Satherley & Norwich, 2022). Even more recent studies have discussed school choice as an affective experience associated with anxiety, risk, and the need for interpretive support when parents are faced with too much information and alternatives (Saltmarsh, 2025; Bertotti & Wilkins, 2026).

This argument becomes even more important when linked to social media. Social media not only increases access to information but also changes how information is processed. Parents can develop an assessment of a school through repeated exposure to photos of activities, testimonials, achievements, facilities, and symbols of school values. In some contexts, social media even encourages social learning, peer comparison, and trust in peer word of mouth, which then influence purchase intentions or choices regarding children's education (Zhou & Suntrayuth, 2025). In other words, when a school consistently

appears on Instagram, that exposure can build familiarity, credibility, and preference. However, the literature also warns that an institution's digital communication is not always neutral; a school's visual representation can selectively shape perceptions, making it crucial to empirically test the extent to which exposure actually influences parental decisions.

Despite the rapid growth of research on parenting and social media, significant gaps remain in the intersection between media exposure, Instagram as visual school communication, and parental school choice. Many studies examine parenting information seeking, brand communication, or enrollment intention separately, while studies directly examining the influence of exposure to a school's Instagram on parents' decisions to choose a school, particularly for Islamic elementary education, are limited. In the context of primary education, parents are the primary decision-makers, and exposure to schools' social media platforms can be one of the most accessible sources of information. Therefore, this study is crucial for clarifying whether and to what extent exposure to Instagram influences parents' school choice decisions for their children, while also broadening the study of digital communication in education within the context of Islamic primary schooling. **Research Question and Hypotheses**  
How does Instagram media exposure affect parents' school choice decisions in an Islamic primary school setting? Instagram media exposure is positively and significantly associated with parents' school choice decisions.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Digitalization of School Communication and School–Family Relations**

Digitalization has reshaped how schools communicate with families and the wider public. School communication is no longer limited to circular letters, school visits, or interpersonal recommendations, but increasingly takes place through platform-based environments that make institutional life continuously visible, searchable, and interpretable. In this context, school social media should be understood not merely as a promotional add-on, but as part of the communicative infrastructure through which schools construct public presence and maintain relations with parents. Recent research shows that parents experience school social media as a medium of connection that can enhance visibility and relational closeness, although it may also generate boundary tensions regarding expectations, access, and responsiveness (Apps et al., 2025). At a broader level, the platformization of educational communication indicates that institutional interactions are increasingly shaped by digital interfaces, algorithmic visibility, and ongoing content circulation rather than by episodic contact alone. As a result, school communication has become more continuous, more visual, and more publicly performative than in earlier forms of school-family interaction.

This transformation matters because communication between schools and families is closely related to the formation of trust, familiarity, and institutional legitimacy. Recent scholarship on family-school partnerships emphasizes that parents do not simply need information; they need communication that is interpretable, relational, and aligned with their concerns and expectations (Markovich et al., 2025). In parallel, reviews on parental perspectives in educational transitions show that parents assess schools across multiple dimensions, including academic development, socio-emotional support, physical environment, and collaborative readiness (Jun et al., 2025). These findings suggest that digital communication becomes influential not because it merely transmits information, but because it helps parents make sense of the school as an institutional environment. Therefore, the communicative role of school social media lies in its capacity to mediate perception, not only in its ability to distribute content.

### **2.2. Parental School Choice as an Interpretive Decision-Making Process**

The literature on school choice consistently demonstrates that parental decisions cannot be reduced to a simple rational comparison of school quality indicators. Rather, school choice is a process situated within a social and interpretive context shaped by access to information, institutional frameworks, prior expectations, and value-based judgments. Recent studies have shown that parents often engage in substantial "information work" when choosing a school, particularly when they lack strong prior

reference points or must navigate an unfamiliar educational system. Parents actively gather, compare, and interpret information to reduce uncertainty and make informed school decisions (Grenier & Magnan, 2025). Similarly, official information materials not only present neutral choices; they also configure parents as specific types of decision-makers, such as citizens, consumers, or both (Jögren & Cakici, 2025). These findings imply that school choice is shaped not only by parental preferences but also by the communicative environment in which those preferences are formed and enacted.

Recent research also suggests that parental choice increasingly occurs within a broader educational marketplace where schools are compared not only through formal reputations but also through mediated impressions. Studies of online schools and school profiles show that parents evaluate schools through perceived suitability, social identity, convenience, and future-oriented aspirations for their children, while schools simultaneously differentiate themselves through public representation (Sokolowski et al., 2026; Zwier, 2025). This means that school choice cannot be separated from the symbolic construction of school image. Parents not only ask which school is objectively best, but also which school aligns with their educational, family, and social expectations. In this sense, mediated visibility becomes part of the evaluation process itself. Schools that are more readily perceived in public communication may become easier to imagine, compare, and choose.

### **2.3. Instagram as a Visual Communication Platform in Educational Decision-Making**

Among social media platforms, Instagram holds a crucial position because it is built around visual-symbolic communication. Images, short videos, captions, coherent layouts, and interactive features combine to create a communicative environment where information is conveyed not only through statements but also through mood, style, and emotional cues. Recent research in digital marketing and media studies suggests that visual communication on Instagram can significantly shape trust, engagement, and behavioral intentions. Social presence in social media photos can strengthen users' intentions to act by making representations feel more immediate and credible (Poirier et al., 2024). Furthermore, symbolic signals on Instagram influence emotions, trust, engagement, and message dissemination (Gurung et al., 2025). Meanwhile, presentation strategies influence how audiences evaluate content (Saternus et al., 2024).

This logic is particularly relevant for educational institutions. School Instagram accounts can showcase student activities, facilities, achievements, religious practices, classroom atmosphere, and institutional values in a way that is immediately accessible to parents. Through repeated exposure, such content can foster familiarity, reduce uncertainty, and provide clues to evaluate school quality and value alignment. At the same time, recent literature on influencer and platform communication suggests that effectiveness depends not only on visibility but also on perceived credibility, coherence, and authenticity (Pan et al., 2025; Libai et al., 2025). For schools, this means that Instagram is persuasive not only because it is active, but because it presents an institutional identity that appears consistent, trustworthy, and meaningful to prospective families. Especially in educational contexts where parents must make choices on behalf of their children, visual presentations of school life can serve as a resource. Interpretive content that helps them imagine what the school experience will be like.

### **2.4. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development**

Instagram media exposure in this study is conceptualized as parents' exposure to, attention to, and understanding of school-related content published on the official MI PKP JIS Instagram account. This exposure includes frequency of access, attention to posts, interest in visual content, engagement with reels or videos, and comprehension of the information presented. In the context of school communication, Instagram provides parents with visual and narrative cues about school programs, student activities, achievements, facilities, religious practices, and institutional values.

Parents' school choice decisions are conceptualized as an evaluative process in which parents search for information, compare school alternatives, assess school quality, consider school advantages, and build confidence in their school choice for their children. Since school choice involves uncertainty and value-

based judgment, exposure to Instagram content may help parents reduce uncertainty, form impressions of the institution, and strengthen their decision-making tendency.

Based on this reasoning, the conceptual framework of this study posits that Instagram media exposure is the independent variable and parents' school choice decisions are the dependent variable. The framework assumes that greater exposure to the school's Instagram content will positively influence parents' decision-making when choosing the school.

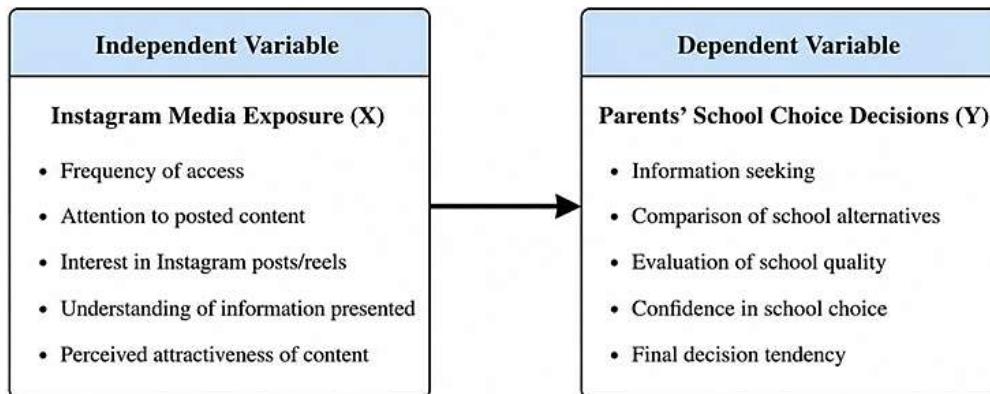


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Therefore, the hypothesis proposed in this study is: H1: Instagram media exposure has a positive and significant effect on parents' school choice decisions.

### 3. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative explanatory design to examine the effect of Instagram media exposure on parents' school choice decisions in an Islamic primary school setting. A quantitative approach was selected because the study aimed to test a direct relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable using numerical data and statistical analysis. The explanatory orientation was appropriate because the study did not merely describe parents' exposure to school social media, but specifically sought to determine whether such exposure significantly influenced their decision-making. This design is commonly used in social media and decision-making research when the objective is to test the magnitude and direction of relationships among measurable constructs (Macías Urrego et al., 2024)

The study was conducted at MI PKP JIS, an Islamic primary school that actively uses Instagram as a communication and promotional channel. The target population consisted of parents or guardians who had access to the school's Instagram account and were either in the process of choosing a school for their child or had previously chosen one. This population definition was important because the study focused specifically on parents as the main educational decision-makers rather than on general Instagram users. In the source manuscript, the fieldwork was conducted over a two-month period from March to May 2026.

The respondents of this study were parents or guardians who had accessed, viewed, or followed the official Instagram account of MI PKP JIS and were involved in choosing a school for their children. This respondent group was selected because parents are the primary decision-makers in elementary school selection, especially in the context of Islamic primary education. Therefore, their exposure to the school's Instagram account is directly relevant to the research objective. Based on the available SPSS output, 104 valid responses were used in the statistical analysis. The respondent profile was also reported based on 104 complete demographic responses. This clarification ensures consistency between the demographic description, validity testing, classical assumption testing, and regression analysis.

The sampling technique used in this study was non-probability purposive sampling. This technique was chosen because the study required respondents who met specific inclusion criteria relevant to the research objective. The inclusion criteria were: (1) being a parent or guardian, (2) having followed,

viewed, or accessed the MI PKP JIS Instagram account, and (3) being currently or previously involved in choosing a school for a child. Based on the collected responses, 104 respondents were included in the statistical analysis, while 104 complete responses were used to describe respondent characteristics. Purposive sampling is methodologically appropriate when researchers need participants with particular experiences or attributes related to the phenomenon under investigation, especially in digital and parent-focused survey research. Similar procedures have been used in recent studies that collected parent responses through electronic surveys with purposively defined criteria (Yu et al., 2025).

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The instrument consisted of 24 items: 12 for the independent variable and 12 for the dependent variable. The independent variable, Instagram media exposure, was treated as a composite construct reflecting parents' overall exposure to the school's Instagram content. The indicators included awareness of the Instagram account, exposure frequency, repeated access, reading of school information, attention to visual content, interest in student activities, attention to achievement-related posts, and perceptions of informativeness and clarity.

The dependent variable, parents' school choice decisions, was also measured as a composite construct, covering information seeking, comparison of school alternatives, evaluation of school quality and programs, confidence in the choice, and final decision tendency. The use of Likert-type instruments is consistent with recent social media survey studies that measure exposure, perception, and decision-oriented constructs through standardized self-report items (La Touche et al., 2025).

To ensure instrument quality, the study applied validity and reliability testing before hypothesis testing. Validity testing assessed whether each questionnaire item adequately represented the intended construct, while reliability testing determined the instrument's internal consistency. According to the source manuscript, all items in both variables were found to be valid and reliable, indicating that the questionnaire was suitable for further statistical analysis. The data analysis procedure consisted of descriptive statistics, classical assumption testing, and simple linear regression. Classical assumption testing included normality, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity checks. Although the model included only one independent variable, the multicollinearity test was still reported, with tolerance and VIF values indicating no multicollinearity problem. After the assumptions were examined, the hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression to estimate the direct effect of Instagram media exposure on parents' school choice decisions.

This analytical strategy was appropriate because the model tested a single predictor and a single outcome, consistent with the study's research question and hypothesis structure. Overall, the methodological design of this study was aligned with its objective: to provide empirical evidence on whether and to what extent exposure to a school's Instagram communication is associated with parents' decisions to choose that school. The approach combined a context-specific sampling strategy, a structured Likert-scale instrument, and regression-based hypothesis testing to yield findings that are both analytically focused and practically relevant to educational communication research.

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1. Respondent Profile

A total of 104 respondents were included in the statistical analysis, while 104 complete responses were used to describe respondent characteristics. This distinction indicates that the analytical model relied on the full, valid dataset, whereas the demographic profile was based on fully completed respondent information. Overall, the respondents were highly relevant to the study's purpose because they were parents or guardians who had access to the MI PKP JIS Instagram account and were involved in educational decision-making for their children.

**Table 1.** Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Sex	Female	92	88.5%
	Male	12	11.5%
Age	25-35 years	60	57.7%
	Other age groups	44	42.3%
Education	Senior high school	8	7.7%
	Diploma	26	25.0%
	Undergraduate degree	62	59.6%
	Postgraduate degree	8	7.7%
Follow MI PKP JIS Instagram	Yes	95	91.3%
	No	9	8.7%

The respondent profile shows that the majority were female, aged 25-35, and held an undergraduate degree. Most respondents also followed MI PKP JIS's official Instagram account. This profile indicates that the respondents were appropriate for this study because they represented parents or guardians who were exposed to the school's digital communication and were relevant to the school choice decision-making process.

#### 4.2. Respondent Profile

Before hypothesis testing, the research instrument was assessed for validity and reliability. Validity was examined using item-to-total correlation values. An item was considered valid when the calculated r-value exceeded the r-table value of 0.191 and the significance value was lower than 0.05. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha; values above 0.60 indicated reliable measurement.

**Table 2.** Validity Results for Instagram Media Exposure (X)

Item	r-count / Loading value	r-table	Sig.	Decision
X1	0.805	0.191	<0.001	Valid
X2	0.873	0.191	<0.001	Valid
X3	0.850	0.191	<0.001	Valid
X4	0.817	0.191	<0.001	Valid
X5	0.786	0.191	<0.001	Valid
X6	0.834	0.191	<0.001	Valid
X7	0.850	0.191	<0.001	Valid
X8	0.793	0.191	<0.001	Valid
X9	0.797	0.191	<0.001	Valid
X10	0.859	0.191	<0.001	Valid
X11	0.723	0.191	<0.001	Valid
X12	0.751	0.191	<0.001	Valid

**Table 3.** Item Validity Results for Parents' School Choice Decisions (Y)

Item	r-count / Loading value	r-table	Sig.	Decision
Y1	0.507	0.191	<0.001	Valid
Y2	0.772	0.191	<0.001	Valid
Y3	0.790	0.191	<0.001	Valid
Y4	0.789	0.191	<0.001	Valid
Y5	0.840	0.191	<0.001	Valid
Y6	0.814	0.191	<0.001	Valid
Y7	0.888	0.191	<0.001	Valid
Y8	0.848	0.191	<0.001	Valid

Y9	0.822	0.191	<0.001	Valid
Y10	0.819	0.191	<0.001	Valid
Y11	0.777	0.191	<0.001	Valid
Y12	0.808	0.191	<0.001	Valid

All items measuring Instagram media exposure and parents' school choice decisions were declared valid because each item had an r-count value higher than the r-table value of 0.191 and a significance value below 0.05. Thus, all 24 questionnaire items were retained for further analysis.

**Table 4.** Descriptive Summary of Instagram Media Exposure (X)

Construct	Items	Loading range	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Decision
Instagram Media Exposure (X)	12	0.723-0.873	0.660	0.959	0.953	Reliable/valid
Parents' School Choice Decisions (Y)	12	0.507-0.888	0.632	0.953	0.945	Reliable/valid

The reliability test showed that Instagram media exposure had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.953, while parents' school choice decisions had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.945. Both values exceed the minimum threshold of 0.60, indicating that the instrument has very strong internal consistency. As supplementary evidence, the AVEs were above 0.50, and the composite reliabilities were above 0.70, suggesting adequate convergent validity and construct reliability.

**Table 5.** Supplementary Fornell-Larcker-Style Discriminant Validity Check

Construct	Instagram Media Exposure (X)	Parents' School Choice Decisions (Y)
Instagram Media Exposure (X)	0.813	
Parents' School Choice Decisions (Y)	0.701	0.795

The square roots of the AVEs for Instagram media exposure and parents' school choice decisions were 0.813 and 0.795, respectively. Both values were higher than the inter-construct correlation of 0.701, suggesting that the two constructs were empirically distinguishable. However, formal cross-loading and HTMT values require raw item-level inter-construct correlations or SmartPLS output; therefore, they should not be reported unless the authors re-estimate the model using PLS-SEM.

### 4.3. Classical Assumption Tests

The study also conducted classical assumption tests before regression analysis. The available SPSS output included normality testing using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, multicollinearity statistics, and a scatterplot for heteroscedasticity assessment.

**Table 6.** Classical Assumption Test Results

Test	Indicator	Result	Interpretation
Normality	Kolmogorov-Smirnov, TOTAL_X	Asymp. Sig. = 0.045	Marginal; acceptable with N = 104 and regression continued cautiously
Normality	Kolmogorov-Smirnov, TOTAL_Y	Asymp. Sig. = 0.171	Normal distribution indicated
Multicollinearity	Tolerance	1.000	No multicollinearity problem

Multicollinearity	VIF	1.000	No multicollinearity problem
Heteroscedasticity	Scatterplot of residuals	No clear pattern	No heteroscedasticity problem

#### 4.4. Hypothesis Testing

The main hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression. The regression equation obtained from the analysis was  $Y = 15.829 + 0.710X$ . This equation indicates that every one-unit increase in Instagram media exposure increased the parents' school choice decision score by 0.710 units. The positive coefficient shows that stronger exposure to the school's Instagram account was associated with a stronger tendency among parents to choose the school.

**Table 7.** Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient	t-value	p-value	R-square	Decision
H1	Instagram Media Exposure -> Parents' School Choice Decisions	0.710	9.941	<0.001	0.492	Supported

The results show that Instagram exposure had a positive and significant effect on parents' school choice decisions. The coefficient was 0.710, with a t-value of 9.941 and a significance value below 0.001. Therefore, H1 was supported. The R-square value of 0.492 indicates that Instagram media exposure explained 49.2% of the variance in parents' school choice decisions, while the remaining 50.8% was explained by other factors outside the model.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study found that Instagram exposure has a positive, statistically significant effect on parents' school choice decisions in the context of Islamic primary education. The hypothesis testing results show that Instagram media exposure significantly predicts parents' school choice decisions, with a regression coefficient of 0.710, a t-value of 9.941, and a significance value of 0.001. Therefore, H1 is supported. The R-square value of 0.492 further indicates that Instagram media exposure explains 49.2% of the variance in parents' school choice decisions. This finding confirms that Instagram is not merely a supplementary communication channel but an important factor in how parents evaluate and decide on school options for their children.

The finding supports the conceptual framework proposed in this study, which positions Instagram media exposure as the independent variable and parents' school choice decisions as the dependent variable. Exposure to the school's Instagram account may influence parents by providing repeated access to information about school programs, student activities, achievements, facilities, religious practices, and institutional values. Through this exposure, parents can become familiar with the school, assess its credibility, and form impressions of whether it aligns with their expectations. In this sense, Instagram functions as an interpretive medium that helps parents understand the school before making an educational decision.

The result also strengthens the argument that school social media has become part of the broader communication ecology of educational institutions. School communication is no longer limited to formal brochures, school visits, or interpersonal recommendations, but increasingly takes place through digital platforms that make institutional identity more visible and accessible. In the case of MI PKP JIS, Instagram enables the school to visually and continuously communicate its image, values, and educational environment. This form of communication is especially relevant for parents who need practical, symbolic, and value-based information before choosing a school for their children.

The significance of Instagram exposure in this study can be understood through the nature of visual and repeated communication. Instagram content allows parents to observe representations of school life, including classroom activities, student achievements, facilities, religious programs, and the institution's overall atmosphere. Such visual information can help parents reduce uncertainty, compare school alternatives, and evaluate whether the school meets their expectations. Therefore, the influence of Instagram exposure is not only related to the frequency of access but also to the way school identity and quality are represented through digital content.

These findings are consistent with previous studies suggesting that social media can shape trust, engagement, and behavioral intention by presenting information in a visual, immediate, and emotionally meaningful form. In educational decision-making, visual communication may help parents form impressions and strengthen confidence in their choices. Instagram can therefore serve as a bridge between institutional communication and parental evaluation. It enables schools to present information in ways that are more accessible, engaging, and easier for parents to interpret than conventional promotional materials.

However, the findings should not be interpreted as indicating that Instagram is the only factor influencing parents' school choice. Although Instagram media exposure explains 49.2% of the variance in parents' school choice decisions, the remaining 50.8% is influenced by other factors outside the model. These factors may include academic quality, tuition fees, location, religious orientation, school reputation, peer recommendations, facilities, safety, and previous experiences with the institution. Therefore, Instagram should be understood as an important but partial factor within a broader and multidimensional school choice process.

This study contributes to the literature on educational communication by demonstrating that social media exposure can be empirically linked to parental school-choice decisions in an Islamic primary school context. Unlike studies that focus mainly on higher education branding or general social media marketing, this study highlights the role of Instagram in elementary school decision-making, where parents act as the primary decision-makers. The Islamic school context also makes this finding meaningful, as parents may consider not only academic quality but also religious values, institutional culture, and the school's moral environment.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that schools need to manage Instagram strategically as part of institutional communication. Instagram content should not only be attractive but also informative, credible, consistent, and aligned with the school's identity. Posts about learning activities, student achievements, religious programs, facilities, teacher-student interaction, and school culture may help parents evaluate the school more effectively. However, visibility alone is insufficient; schools also need to ensure that their digital communication reflects authenticity and builds trust.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. This study was conducted in a single Islamic primary school and used purposive sampling, which limits the generalizability of the findings. The model also used only one independent variable, namely Instagram media exposure. Future studies are recommended to include additional predictors such as school reputation, tuition fees, distance, religious orientation, peer recommendation, service quality, and parental trust. Future research may also use qualitative methods to explore how parents interpret specific Instagram content and how digital impressions interact with offline experiences to shape school choice decisions.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Instagram media exposure has a positive and significant effect on parents' school choice decisions in the context of Islamic primary education. The hypothesis testing results confirm that higher exposure to the official Instagram account of MI PKP JIS is associated with stronger parental decision-making in choosing the school. With a regression coefficient of 0.710 and an R-square value of 0.492, the findings indicate that Instagram media exposure explains 49.2% of the variance in

parents' school choice decisions. Thus, the proposed hypothesis is supported. The findings demonstrate that Instagram functions not only as a promotional platform but also as an important part of the school's communication ecology. Through visual and repeated exposure to information about school programs, student activities, achievements, facilities, religious practices, and institutional values, parents are able to form impressions, evaluate school quality, and develop confidence in their school choice. In this sense, Instagram serves as an interpretive medium that helps parents understand the school before making an educational decision.

The main contribution of this study lies in its focus on Instagram media exposure in the context of Islamic primary education, where parents act as the primary decision-makers. While previous studies have often examined social media communication in higher education or general marketing contexts, this study shows that school social media also plays an important role in elementary school choice. The Islamic school context further highlights that parental decisions are shaped not only by academic considerations but also by religious values, institutional identity, and perceptions of the school's moral environment. Practically, the findings suggest that Islamic primary schools should manage Instagram strategically as part of institutional communication. Schools need to present content that is not only attractive but also informative, credible, consistent, and aligned with their educational and religious identity. Content related to learning activities, student achievements, teacher-student interactions, religious programs, facilities, and school culture may help parents evaluate the school more effectively and strengthen their trust in the institution.

However, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted in a single Islamic primary school and used purposive sampling, which limits the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the model only examined one independent variable, namely Instagram media exposure. Future studies are recommended to include additional variables such as school reputation, tuition fees, distance, religious orientation, parental trust, peer recommendations, and service quality. Comparative studies involving several schools and qualitative approaches are also needed to better understand how parents interpret school-related Instagram content and how digital impressions interact with offline experiences in shaping school choice decisions.

## References

- Al Khalili, T. (2025). Parental strategies and educational inequalities during severe economic, political, and refugee crises in conflict-affected Lebanon. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 26, 553–566. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-025-10040-7>
- Apps, T., Beckman, K., Pawlicka, N., & Kidson, P. (2025). The nature of connection: Parents' experiences with school social media. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2025.2541714>
- Bertotti, V., & Wilkins, A. W. (2026). The neurotic parent: Affect, risk and school choice. *Journal of Education Policy*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2026.2655795>
- Bessant, C. (2024). School social media use and its impact upon children's rights to privacy and autonomy. *Computers and Education Open*, 6, 100185. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeo.2024.100185>
- Bosáková, V. (2025). Comparative study of parental strategies in urban and non-urban contexts when choosing a primary school. *Journal of School Choice*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2025.2606905>



- Eldeeb, N., Ren, C., & Shapiro, V. B. (2025). Parent information seeking and sharing: Using unsupervised machine learning to identify common parenting issues. *Children and Youth Services Review, 172*, 108210. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2025.108210>
- Grenier, V., & Magnan, M. O. (2025). Exploring information gathering work undertaken by immigrant parents to choose a high school in Montreal. *Journal of School Choice, 19*(2), 324–349. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2024.2386612>
- Gurung, M. I., Agarwal, N., Bhuiyan, M. M. I., & Poudel, D. (2025). Symbolic signals on Instagram: How visual media shapes engagement, emotion, trust, and diffusion. *Social Network Analysis and Mining, 15*, 57. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13278-025-01469-0>
- Hands, C., Kurucz, E., Spencer-Mueller, E. K., Gudz, N., & Archer, K. (2025). Beyond school newsletters and memos: Family engagement in planning, developing, and delivering an innovative STEM program. *Education Sciences, 15*(6), 665. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15060665>
- Juhaidi, A. (2024). Social media marketing of Islamic higher education institution in Indonesia: A marketing mix perspective. *Cogent Business & Management, 11*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2374864>
- Jun, J., Meissel, K., Cooper, M., & Rudd, G. (2025). A systematic review: Parental perspective on school readiness during the pre- and post-transition periods. *International Journal of Educational Research Open, 9*, 100486. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2025.100486>
- La Touche, R., Reina-Varona, Á., Grande-Alonso, M., León-Hernández, J. V., Pardo-Montero, J., Requejo-Salinas, N., Ferrer-Peña, R., & Paris-Aleman, A. (2025). Student satisfaction in social media-based learning environments: Development, validation, and psychometric evaluation of the CuSAERS (Questionnaire of Satisfaction With Educational Activities Performed on Social Media). *JMIR Medical Education, 11*, e73805. <https://doi.org/10.2196/73805>
- Li, S., Quan, Y., Xiao, L., Ren, H., & Abinova, A. Y. (2025). Exploring the influence of social media communication and brand image on international student enrollment intentions in higher education. *Frontiers in Education, 10*, 1618524. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1618524>
- Libai, B., Rosario, A. B., Beichert, M., Donkers, B., Haenlein, M., Hofstetter, R., Kannan, P. K., van der Lans, R., Lanz, A., Li, H. A., Mayzlin, D., Muller, E., Shapira, D., Yang, J., & Zhang, L. (2025). Influencer marketing unlocked: Understanding the value chains driving the creator economy. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 53*, 4–28. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-024-01073-2>
- Macías Urrego, J. A., García Pineda, V., & Montoya Restrepo, L. A. (2024). The power of social media in the decision-making of current and future professionals: A crucial analysis in the digital era. *Cogent Business & Management, 11*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2421411>
- Markovich Morris, E., & Cheng, Y.-L. (2025). Parents as allies: Innovative strategies for (re)imagining family, school, and community partnerships. *Education Sciences, 15*(5), 533. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15050533>
- Mertens, E., Ye, G., Beuckels, E., & Hudders, L. (2024). Parenting information on social media: Systematic literature review. *JMIR Pediatrics and Parenting, 7*, e55372. <https://doi.org/10.2196/55372>

- Ogawa, K., Alam, M. J., Noman, S., & Parvin, M. (2025). Parental perception on school choice for quality early childhood education in Bangladesh: A socio-economic analysis. *Cogent Education*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2543137>
- Onishi, R. (2024). Parental information-use strategies in a digital parenting environment and their associations with parental social support and self-efficacy: Cross-sectional study. *JMIR Pediatrics and Parenting*, 7, e58757. <https://doi.org/10.2196/58757>
- Pan, M., Blut, M., Ghiassaleh, A., & Lee, Z. W. Y. (2025). Influencer marketing effectiveness: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 53, 52–78. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-024-01052-7>
- Poirier, S.-M., Cosby, S., Sénécal, S., Coursaris, C. K., Fredette, M., & Léger, P.-M. (2024). The impact of social presence cues in social media product photos on consumers' purchase intentions. *Journal of Business Research*, 185, 114932. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.114932>
- Pusztai, G., Róbert, P., & Fényes, H. (2023). Parental involvement and school choice in Hungarian primary schools. *Journal of School Choice*, 17(1), 118–135. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2023.2169812>
- Saltmarsh, J. E. (2025). A case of interpretive assistance and school choice counseling. *Education Inquiry*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2025.2544448>
- Saternus, Z., Mihale-Wilson, C., & Hinz, O. (2024). Influencer marketing on Instagram—The optimal disclosure strategy from influencers' and marketers' perspectives. *Electronic Markets*, 34, 60. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12525-024-00743-x>
- Satherley, D., & Norwich, B. (2022). Parents' experiences of choosing a special school for their children. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 37(6), 950–964. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1967298>
- Sjögren, H., & Cakici, B. (2025). Configuring parents as citizens and consumers: Local variations in informational material about school allocation and choice in Sweden. *Education Inquiry*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2025.2463206>
- Sokolowski, D. A., Perry, L. B., Saunders, R., & Barbour, M. K. (2026). Parent choice in K–12 online schooling: Australian and U.S. perspectives. *Journal of School Choice*, 20(1), 156–182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2025.2464502>
- Yu, B., Zhang, D., Sun, Y., et al. (2025). Exploring the impact of social influence on parents' intention to use institutional childcare: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Health Services Research*, 25, 198. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-025-12362-z>
- Zhou, J., & Suntrayuth, S. (2025). Social media facilitated learning and parents' purchase intentions of non-academic tutoring services for children. *Acta Psychologica*, 255, 104886. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.104886>
- Zwier, D. (2025). Be true to your school: School profiling and school sorting by socio-economic status. *Social Science Research*, 132, 103239. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2025.103239>