Supporting multilingual learners: Parental roles in modern Islamic boarding school

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Abstract

Bilingual and multilingual education programmes are being adopted with increasing frequency by modern Islamic boarding schoo*l*s *(pesantren)* in Indonesia, with the aim of enhancing students' linguistic abilities and academic performance. This study examines parental involvement in children's education at multilingual *pesantren,* with a focus on their roles in supporting language learning and adapting to school language policies. A mixed-methods approach was used to collect data from twenty-five parents via questionnaires and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Grounded theory analysis was then applied using open, axial, and selective coding to identify key themes. The findings reveal five themes: self-development; parental motivation and pride; optimism for future success; emotional support; and parental participation in school activities. Parents view proficiency in Arabic and English as a religious asset and a strategic skill for global engagement. The study highlights the comprehensive nature of parental involvement in multilingual *pesantrens* and proposes further research into its long-term impact on students' academic and social outcomes.

Keywords: *Grounded theory; Islamic boarding school; multilingual education; parental involvement; school language policy*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, modern Islamic schools have increasingly adopted bilingual education programs with the objective of enhancing their students' linguistic abilities and academic performance. Modern Islamic boarding schools in general already have and provide multilingual language education for children or students studying at Islamic boarding schools from the most basic level of education to higher education (Rozza et al., 2023). These programmes integrate Arabic and English with Indonesian, providing students with a comprehensive education that blends religious and secular knowledge and prepares them for local and global contexts.

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, the concept of parental involvement encompasses not only the biological roles of parents but also extends to include spiritual guidance and support. A study conducted by Ginanto et al. (2021) defines parents as individuals who impart knowledge to students and are held in high regard by them. This aligns with Islamic teachings that place significant emphasis on the importance of knowledge and sincerity, and with prior research showing that family language policies strongly influence children's linguistic development (Slavkov, 2016; Piller & Gerber, 2018).

Modern pesantrens typically adopt structured language policies for the school environment, such as alternating weekly between English and Arabic for daily communication, with penalties for non-compliance (Bretuo, 2020). While these approaches foster linguistic immersion, students may still use Indonesian or other local languages when interacting with their parents. This code-switching between home and school languages highlights the significance of parental engagement in promoting language acquisition beyond the confines of the classroom (Annisa, 2019; Dewi, 2017).

Previous studies have examined various aspects of multilingual education in pesantren and related contexts. For example, Abdurrizal et al. (2022) investigated teacher agency in implementing multilingual policies, and Hu et al. (2014) examined parental support for bilingual development in settings where the language spoken at school differs from that spoken at home. Keydeniers et al. (2021) and Zemzemiyeh et al. (2024) have explored bilingual input in early childhood settings. Oladejo (2006), meanwhile, has investigated parental attitudes towards bilingual policies in Taiwan. In the Indonesian Islamic context, Surotun et al. (2022) examined the implementation of bilingual programmes in Islamic primary schools, while Rohmah and Roqib (2024) discussed curriculum models that integrate religious subjects (Arabic) with general subjects (English and Indonesian). Ritonga and Nurdianto (2022) analysed strategies for improving Arabic proficiency through immersion in pesantren, and Fakhrudin et al. (2025) described a successful bilingual programme at MA Al Hikmah 2 that enhanced English proficiency through a tailored curriculum and extracurricular initiatives, while Sofyan et al. (2022) highlighted the impact of Arabic linguistic landscapes in pesantren environments on students' Arabic language skills and Islamic knowledge. Together, these studies emphasise the interplay between school and home environments, pedagogical strategies, and policy implementation in shaping multilingual learning outcomes in Islamic educational settings.

While previous studies have provided valuable insights into multilingual education, ranging from teacher agency and curriculum implementation to bilingual input, parental support, and ideologies, most have primarily emphasised the roles of teachers, school policies, or formal programmes in shaping bilingual or multilingual outcomes. While some studies (e.g. Hu et al., 2014; Wan & Gao, 2021) have addressed parental involvement, these were conducted outside the pesantren context. Consequently, our understanding of how parents contribute to and engage with multilingual education in Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia remains limited. This study aims to address this knowledge gap by examining parental involvement in supporting not only

language learning, but also the provision of psychological and social support to sustain students' multilingual and holistic development within the unique Pesantren environment.

Indonesia is a country with a rich and complex linguistic and cultural landscape. Some schools in Indonesia apply Bilingual and Multilingual Language to provide material during class, while those who apply it outside the classroom when interacting with their friends. Cummins's (2015) research shows that educators have considerable power to reject and challenge coercive power relationships that operate on the dimensions of the structural/educational continuum (e.g. curriculum materials) and interpersonal (e.g. classroom interactions). Thus, the proposed framework is an explanatory model to explain patterns of school success and failure among marginalized group students and a predictive model to determine educator behaviors that tend to improve academic achievement.

However, little is known about how parents in Indonesia perceive and respond to school language policies in modern *pesantren,* or how their roles influence their children's daily multilingual practices in boarding school environments. Although teacher perspectives and classroom practices have been documented, parental viewpoints, especially regarding their strategies, motivations and challenges, remain under-explored. This research addresses this gap by investigating how parents help their children adapt to multilingual boarding schools and support school language policies, both in general and regarding language use.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative element involved distributing questionnaires to 25 parents of pupils at modern multilingual Islamic boarding schools *(pesantren).* These questionnaires contained closed questions and a Likert scale to measure parents' attitudes, motivations and perceptions of their children's language learning experiences (Creswell, 2018).

The qualitative component consisted of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a subset of the respondents. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or via online video call, depending on the participants' availability. These interviews focused on five main areas: parents' motivations for enrolling their children in multilingual *pesantren;* strategies used at home to support language learning; perceptions of the school's language policy; experiences of providing emotional support and communicating with children; and participation in school activities and events (Given, 2023). The sampling strategy followed the theoretical sampling principle of grounded theory, enabling the researcher to select participants who could provide diverse perspectives and refine the sample as new themes emerged (Ligita et al., 2020).

Data analysis was conducted alongside data collection, enabling the iterative refinement of both the interview questions and the thematic categorisation. First, open coding was applied to identify significant statements

and concepts in the raw data. These codes were then grouped into broader categories using axial coding, and the relationships between them were examined. Finally, selective coding was used to identify the five core themes that structured the findings (Saldaña, 2021). During the interpretation process, the quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated to allow triangulation and validation of the emerging themes. This ensured a comprehensive understanding of parents' roles in supporting multilingual education within the *pesantren* context (Fetters & Molina-Azorín, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to gain insight into the linguistic practices of parents who educate their children at Islamic boarding schools, interview data was collected from two parents. Their children use three languages: English and Arabic during daily interactions at the school and Indonesian or the local language when communicating with parents or individuals outside the school. The interviews aimed to gather information on parental involvement and understand how parents perceive their decision to educate their children in bilingual Islamic boarding schools. Interviewing multiple sources enabled the researcher to capture diverse perspectives and address various issues that emerged during the formulation of the research questions.

1. Self-development

The primary reason these parents chose a pesantren for their first child, who is proficient in both English and Arabic, was to enable their child to continue learning these languages in the future. The parents were also asked about their expectations regarding their children's education at the pesantren. This finding aligns with prior research by Keydeniers et al. (2021), which suggests that English proficiency can enhance future educational and employment opportunities. Below is a quote from Parent A, the father of a student enrolled in the multilingual pesantren.

Table 1. Aspects of self-development that showed improvement

Aspect of Self-Development	Significantly Improved	Improved	No Change	Decreased
Independence	13	10	2	0
Sense of Responsibility	12	11	2	0
Foreign Language Proficiency	15	9	1	0
Social Skills	10	11	4	0
Discipline	14	8	3	0
Understanding of Religious Values	17	7	1	0
Time and Study Management	11	10	4	0
Self-Confidence	9	13	3	0

The table illustrates eight aspects of children's self-development, as observed by their parents while they attended the multilingual Islamic boarding school. The assessment categories are as follows: Significantly Improved, Improved, No Change and Decreased. Regarding independence, 13 parents

reported that their child had become significantly more independent, 10 noted improvement, two observed no change, and none reported a decrease. Regarding sense of responsibility, 12 parents reported significant improvement, 11 noted improvement and only two saw no change — none perceived a decrease. Foreign language proficiency was the highest-rated aspect, with 15 respondents stating that it had significantly improved, nine indicating improvement and only one observing no change; there were no reports of decreased. Ten parents observed significant improvement in social skills, 11 reported improvement and four saw no change. In terms of discipline, 14 parents noted significant improvement, eight reported improvement and three observed no change, with no negative assessments. Understanding of religious values was the aspect that was most frequently rated as having significantly improved, with 17 respondents, followed by 7 who reported improvement and only 1 who saw no change. Regarding time and study management, 11 parents noted significant improvement, 10 reported improvement and four saw no change. Lastly, regarding self-confidence, nine parents observed significant improvement, 13 reported improvement and three noted no change; none reported a decrease.

To reinforce these findings, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with several relevant informants. These interviews were systematically arranged to support the analysis and interpretation of the research results.

> **Interviewer:** *"What made you choose a multilingual Islamic boarding school for your child?"*
>
> **Respondent 1**: *"I want my child to master religious knowledge and acquire foreign language skills, such as Arabic and English. In this era of globalization, multilingual ability is crucial for their future, in terms of both career opportunities and religious outreach (dakwah)."*

This statement reflects an educational approach that goes beyond purely religious objectives, instead aiming to reinforce global competencies. The parent expresses a desire for their child to develop multilingual skills, which they believe will support success in professional domains and religious-social roles such as *dakwah.* In this context, the child's self-development encompasses cognitive, social, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously. Parents perceive the multilingual Pesantren as an institution capable of fostering holistic personal growth, equipping students with not only academic and religious knowledge, but also the ability to adapt to and contribute meaningfully to a global society.

> **Respondent 2:** *"We hope that, in the future, we can contribute to the well-being of our family and society while applying the knowledge we have gained. We also hope that our daughter will achieve success through her own efforts."*

This statement reflects the fact that parents have long-term expectations regarding the impact of education on their children as individuals, as well as on the broader family and community. It highlights the idea that success in multilingual Islamic boarding schools is measured not only by academic achievement, but also by social contribution. Parent A's view strikes a balance between individual success and social responsibility, with independence, the practical application of knowledge and community benefit serving as key indicators of educational success. Therefore, self-development within

multilingual Pesantren is evaluated based not only on academic competence, but also on character development and the cultivation of social values.

> **Interviewer:** *"What significant changes have you observed in your child since enrolling in the multilingual Islamic boarding school?"*
>
> **Respondent 3**: *"My child has become more confident in communication, especially when using foreign languages. She is also more disciplined in managing her time between religious studies, language learning, and extracurricular activities. Her critical thinking skills have also developed because she often engages in discussions with students from diverse cultural backgrounds."*

This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that multilingual and multicultural learning environments can enhance students' self-confidence, discipline and critical thinking skills (Cummins, 2015; Keydeniers et al., 2021). In the pesantren context, it seems that structured language policies and diverse peer interactions reinforce these competencies. Intensive interaction within the boarding school system, coupled with dynamic and active learning processes, encourages students to become effective communicators in both their mother tongue and foreign languages such as Arabic and English. This directly improves communication competence and enhances readiness to face global challenges.

> **Interviewer:** *"How does the Pesantren contribute to your child's character development?"*
>
> **Respondent 4:** *'This Pesantren focuses not only on academics, but also on character building. My child is taught responsibility, independence, and leadership through programs such as student organizations and social activities. The boarding system also helps them adapt to a diverse environment."*

This quotation reinforces the idea that Pesantren education nurtures intellectual growth and emphasizes character formation and moral values. Activities such as student organizations, social outreach and communal living serve as effective platforms for cultivating responsibility, independence, and leadership skills. Thus, the multilingual Pesantren emerges as a holistic learning environment where academic achievement is balanced with the development of ethical and interpersonal competencies. In line with the research of Siregar et al. (2024), the discussion focused on the challenges and opportunities of moral and Islamic religious education within the modern Islamic boarding school curriculum. This highlights the complexity of integrating academic achievement, character development and social interaction.

> **Interviewer:** *"What are your hopes for your child after they graduate from this Pesantren?"*
>
> **Respondent 5**: *"I hope my child will become part of a generation that is spiritually and intellectually excellent. With a foundation in language and religion, I hope she will either pursue further studies abroad or contribute to society, for example by becoming a preacher capable of delivering religious messages in multiple languages."*

This statement reveals the parent's long-term aspirations for their child to grow into a spiritually grounded, intellectually capable individual with multilingual proficiency and global awareness. They believe that a strong foundation in religion is essential for maintaining moral integrity, and that mastery of foreign languages is a gateway to broader engagement, whether through pursuing international education or contributing to society through community service and cross-linguistic religious outreach. According to this perspective, education at a multilingual Pesantren encompasses more than just academic achievement; it also prepares students to thrive and serve in a globalized, multicultural world. This is also supported by a study by Umniyah et al. (2023). They explained that the practice of using different languages in English Club activities at Islamic boarding schools helps students use multiple languages (Indonesian, English, Arabic, and local languages). This approach enhances communication, creativity, active participation, and collaborative skills within a global and multicultural context.

2. Parental Motivasion

In addition, the researchers identified another underlying motivation behind parents' decisions to enroll their children in multilingual boarding schools. This finding is consistent with the study by Keydeniers et al. (2021), which observed that parents strive to equip their children with English proficiency in anticipation of future international endeavors.

Table 2. Parental Motivation for Choosing Multilingual Boarding Schools

No	Statement	SD	A	SA
1	Proud that their child can speak foreign languages	0	12	13
2	Proud that their child receives a strong religious education	0	9	16
3	Child has become more disciplined	1	13	10
4	Satisfied with character development	0	15	10
5	Confident in the child's brighter future	0	7	18
6	Enjoys sharing about their child studying at a multilingual *Pesantren*	0	13	12

Based on the survey results, several factors suggest that parents are proud of their children's development. Firstly, about foreign language proficiency, none of the respondents disagreed, with 12 (48%) agreeing and 13 (52%) strongly agreeing. Regarding religious education, nine respondents (36%) agreed and 16 (64%) strongly agreed, with no respondents disagreeing. Regarding discipline, one respondent (4%) disagreed, while thirteen (52%) agreed and ten (40%) strongly agreed. Regarding character development, none of the respondents disagreed; 15 (60%) agreed and 10 (40%) strongly agreed. All respondents expressed positive views about the child's future: 7 (28%) agreed and 18 (72%) strongly agreed. Lastly, regarding pride in sharing their child's experience of a multilingual *Pesantren*, all participants responded positively: 13 (52%) agreed, and 12 (48%) strongly agreed.

To support these findings, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with several relevant informants. These interviews were systematically organized to reinforce the analysis and interpretation of the research results.

> **Respondent**: *"As a parent, I am happy with my child's proficiency in the English language. In addition, she has had the opportunity to develop her understanding of English and Arabic at boarding school."*

This statement illustrates the parent's pride in their child's achievement in acquiring foreign languages, particularly English and Arabic. The respondent clearly expresses their joy at their child's English proficiency, suggesting that language ability is regarded as an important indicator of academic progress and success. Furthermore, the parent acknowledges the boarding school's role in providing sustained learning opportunities in two foreign languages. This reinforces the idea that Pesantren that teach multiple languages can be strategic spaces for developing global competencies alongside traditional education (Anggadwita et al., 2024; Zheng et al., 2024).

> **Interviewer:** *"What made you choose a multilingual Pesantren for your child?"*
>
> **Respondent:** *"I want my child to master religious knowledge and acquire foreign language skills, such as Arabic and English. In this era of globalization, multilingual ability is crucial for the future, whether in the job market or religious outreach."*

The importance of multilingual competence is evident in two key areas: professional careers and religious outreach. This suggests that parents view language as a means of communicating with and contributing to society and religious life. Arabic is associated with interpreting Islamic texts, while English and Mandarin are linked to global communication and international career prospects. In the context of multilingual pesantren education, this perspective aligns with the finding that pesantrens seek to combine religious values with global-minded competencies such as entrepreneurship and language learning (Anggadwita et al., 2024). Furthermore, empirical studies have demonstrated that proficiency in foreign languages is a robust predictor of global competence, equipping students with the necessary skills to flourish in an increasingly globalised world (Zheng et al., 2024).

> **Interviewer:** *"What significant changes have you noticed in your child since they started attending the multilingual Pesantren?"*
>
> **Respondent:** *"My child has become much more confident when communicating, especially when using foreign languages. She is also more disciplined when it comes to managing her time between religious studies, language learning and extracurricular activities. Her critical thinking skills have improved too, as she often engages in discussions with students from different cultural backgrounds."*

The multilingual Pesantren serves as a center for religious and language learning, as well as a space for character development, discipline and the cultivation of critical thinking through positive, structured social interactions. Its boarding and multicultural framework nurtures students' self-confidence, life skills, and global readiness.

> **Interviewer:** *"What are your hopes for your child after they graduate from the Pesantren?"*

> ***Respondent:*** *"I hope my child will become a spiritually and intellectually excellent individual. With a foundation in language and religion, I hope she will pursue higher education abroad or contribute to society, perhaps by becoming a preacher capable of delivering religious messages in various languages."*

This shows the parents' ideas about the future of education, which they think should include both spirituality and intelligence. They emphasise that a combination of strong religious values and proficiency in foreign languages is essential for preparing a generation that can navigate global change. Their aspiration for international study reflects their appreciation of global education and their belief that proficiency in multiple languages facilitates academic mobility (Anggadwita et al., 2024; Zheng et al., 2024). Furthermore, the hope that the child will be able to preach across linguistic and cultural boundaries highlights the desire to foster a socially and spiritually transformative figure, someone who can bridge communities with purpose and conviction.

> ***Interviewer:*** *"What are your hopes for your child after they graduate?"*
>
> ***Respondent:*** *'I hope she can become an ambassador for religion and culture, using her talents to make positive contributions through religious outreach, diplomacy, or education. I believe that, with the foundation she gains from this Pesantren, she will make her family proud and benefit many others."*

This statement reflects the high expectations that parents have for their child's future role as a religious and cultural ambassador. The respondent envisages the child as a religious individual who will represent Islam and Indonesia both nationally and internationally. Dakwah represents the spiritual dimension, while diplomacy reflects linguistic and intercultural communication skills, and education contributes to the intellectual advancement of society. These aspirations are rooted in the belief that a multilingual *pesantren* education enriches students' religious knowledge and 21st century competencies, such as communication, leadership, and cultural literacy (Anggadwita et al., 2024; Zheng et al., 2024).

3. Optimism for future success

Another reason why parents enroll their children in multilingual *Pesantren* is that they want their children to become transnational elites — individuals with strong English proficiency who can secure promising careers and lead meaningful lives with both local and global advantages (Wan & Gao, 2021).

Table 3. Optimism for Future Success

No	Statement	SD	A	SA
1	I am confident my child will succeed academically.	0	10	15
2	My child has adequate language skills to compete in a global era.	0	12	13
3	Religious education at the *Pesantren* strengthens my child's preparation for the future.	0	8	17

4	I believe my child can make a positive contribution to society.	0	11	13
5	The multilingual *Pesantren* education system is relevant to the demands of the times.	0	13	12
6	My child shows focused interests and talents.	0	12	13

Based on responses from 25 participants, most parents expressed a positive attitude towards their children's education at multilingual Islamic boarding schools. All respondents reported feeling proud of their children's ability to speak foreign languages, with 13 respondents (52%) strongly agreeing and 12 respondents (48%) agreeing. Regarding religious education, all respondents also expressed pride, with 16 (64%) strongly agreeing and nine (36%) agreeing. Regarding their children's discipline, one respondent (4%) disagreed, while the rest gave favorable responses: 13 (52%) agreed, and 10 (40%) strongly agreed. Satisfaction with character development was similarly high, with no respondents disagreeing and the majority expressing agreement or strong agreement. Optimism about their children's future was particularly strong, with 18 parents (72%) strongly agreeing that their children have a bright future.

To reinforce these findings, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with several relevant informants. These interviews were systematically organized to support the analysis and interpretation of the results.

Respondent: *"It is only natural for parents to enroll their children in a Pesantren in the hope that they will gain religious and worldly knowledge. This knowledge cannot easily be acquired from parents or in an environment that may not be conducive to learning. Furthermore, parental hopes may evolve as the child's environment and career path change."*

As this statement illustrates, parents have high hopes that sending their children to Islamic boarding schools will benefit their social and educational development, particularly regarding strengthening their religious commitment and enhancing their future career prospects (Anggadwita et al., 2024; Zheng et al., 2024). Mastering two languages, Arabic and English are seen as a vital part of this transition. Given English's global dominance, parents increasingly regard proficiency in the language as essential for their children's future success and broader opportunities.

Interviewer: *"How optimistic are you about your child's future after graduating from this Pesantren?"*

Respondent: *"Very optimistic! I have seen them grow rapidly, not only in their proficiency in Arabic and English, but also in their critical thinking and social skills. With this foundation, I'm confident they will find success in their professional lives and in contributing to society."*

The respondent's statement reflects a high level of optimism regarding their child's future following an education at a multilingual Pesantren. This confidence is grounded in direct observations of significant development in language acquisition (Arabic and English) and in the cognitive and social

spheres, including critical thinking and interpersonal abilities. The respondent believes that this combination of intellectual and social competencies will equip their child with a strong foundation for success in both the professional sphere and in making meaningful contributions to society.

> *Interviewer*: *"How does the Pesantren prepare students to face global challenges?"*
>
> *Respondent*: *"The Pesantren not only teaches languages, but also broadens students' perspectives on cultures and global issues. My child often participates in Model United Nations simulations and student exchange programmes. These experiences teach them to think openly and compete internationally."*

This response emphasises the strategic role of the multilingual pesantren in equipping students to address global challenges through a comprehensive educational approach. As well as fostering foreign language mastery, the Pesantren provides a space in which students can explore cultural diversity and address relevant global issues. This reflects their transformation into adaptive educational institutions that integrate religious values with the 21st century competencies required to navigate and compete in an increasingly interconnected world (Anggadwita et al., 2024; Zheng et al., 2024).

> *Interviewer*: *"What do you do to maintain this sense of optimism?"*
>
> *Respondent*: *"We maintain intensive communication with the Pesantren to monitor our child's progress. At home, we foster a supportive environment by providing multilingual books and discussing global issues. We also encourage them to participate in seminars or international events to help expand their network."*

This response illustrates that parental support for their child's future is active, taking the form of concrete, sustained actions. Frequent communication with the Pesantren demonstrates parents' active role in bridging the school and home environments to ensure their child's optimal development. At home, support is demonstrated by fostering an intellectually stimulating atmosphere, providing multilingual materials, and initiating conversations on global topics, all of which help to shape the child's awareness and potential.

> *Interviewer*: *"What is your greatest hope for your child after graduation?"*
>
> *Respondent*: *"I hope they become a leader who achieves material success while also upholding integrity and social responsibility. They could become a lecturer at an international university, a diplomat, or an entrepreneur who prioritizes Islamic values, for example. I believe that with the education from this multilingual Pesantren, all of this is achievable."*

This statement reflects parents' lofty aspirations for their child's future, highlighting a vision that extends beyond material success to encompass moral character and strong values. Their wish for their child to become a leader who embodies integrity and social responsibility suggests their belief that their child will contribute meaningfully to society, whether in academia, diplomacy, or

business. Their belief that a multilingual pesantren education can pave the way for these ambitions highlights their deep trust in the curriculum's ability to nurture individuals capable of operating globally while remaining firmly rooted in their Islamic identity (Zheng, 2019; Anggadwita et al., 2021).

4. Emotional Support

One of the primary preparatory roles of parents who enroll their children in multilingual boarding schools is to provide motivation and encouragement. This aligns with findings by Hu et al. (2014), which indicate that even when children are educated in a language other than their mother tongue, parents continue to support and motivate them—aiming to facilitate future career success and enhance their communication skills with external communities.

Table 4. Emotional Support

No	Statement	SD	A	SA
1	I always encourage my child in their *Pesantren* education.	0	9	16
2	I listen attentively to my child's stories and concerns.	0	12	13
3	I praise my child for both small and major accomplishments.	0	14	11
4	I maintain positive communication, even though my child lives far away at the *Pesantren.*	0	13	12
5	I openly express my pride in my child.	0	10	15

The survey results indicate a very high level of parental involvement and emotional support for children enrolled in multilingual Islamic boarding schools. In terms of encouragement, 16 respondents strongly agreed and nine agreed that they consistently motivate their children. A similar pattern emerges regarding the habit of listening attentively to children's stories and concerns, with 13 respondents strongly agreeing and 12 agreeing. Expression of appreciation for children's achievements, both large and small, also reflects strong parental commitment, with 11 respondents strongly agreeing and 14 agreeing. Long-distance communication is well maintained, as demonstrated by 12 respondents strongly agreeing and 13 agreeing that they maintain positive interactions despite physical separation. Lastly, pride is openly expressed. Fifteen respondents strongly agreed and ten agreed that they actively show pride in their children. These findings suggest an emotional support-rich parenting model, in which parents not only meet their children's formal educational needs, but also provide essential psychological reinforcement to support their holistic development.

To further explore these findings, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with several relevant informants. These interviews were systematically organized to support the interpretation and analysis of the survey data.

> **Respondent***: "As I mentioned earlier, we truly strive to encourage our children at boarding school because it is very difficult for them to be away from their parents. We are always there for them and try to motivate them to keep going."*

The respondent also explained that children in boarding schools often wish to drop out due to being away from their families. For this reason, consistent encouragement is seen as essential, as a lack of enthusiasm or motivation from family, especially parents, would be unfair and potentially detrimental to the child's educational experience.

> *Interviewer: "What kind of emotional support do you provide for your child while they are attending the multilingual Pesantren?"*
>
> *Respondent: "Even though we do not meet every day, I always try to motivate my child. I usually contact them via phone or video call to ask how they are doing, listen to their stories, and encourage them to keep studying."*

The respondent provides their child, who is enrolled in the multilingual *Pesantren*, with meaningful emotional support. Despite the physical distance, they make a consistent effort to stay connected through calls and virtual communication. During these interactions, the respondent actively asks about their child's well-being, listens to their experiences, and motivates them to maintain their academic enthusiasm.

> *Interviewer: "Do you think that communication is important for maintaining your child's motivation?"*
>
> *Respondent: "Absolutely. My child once said that they feel stronger when carrying out their activities at the Pesantren every time I give them encouragement. So even though we are far apart, we maintain an emotional connection."*

This response reveals that the parent views communication as essential in sustaining their child's motivation while studying at the *Pesantren*. The child reportedly experiences a positive emotional impact from these interactions, gaining strength from the support provided. Despite the physical separation, the respondent highlights the importance of maintaining emotional closeness, affirming its role in the child's psychological resilience.

> *Interviewer: "How do you support your child when they face difficulties?"*
>
> *Respondent: "I don't immediately offer solutions — I listen first. Sometimes they just need someone to talk to. After that, I'll offer advice or encouragement. The important thing is that they know I am always here to support them, not pressure them."*

This shows how the mother understands her child and helps them when they have problems. By prioritising active listening over immediate problem solving, the parent acknowledges their child's need to express their feelings. Only once they have understood their child's feelings do they offer advice and motivation, thereby demonstrating a non-demanding and supportive parental presence. This approach fosters a safe emotional space, reinforcing the child's sense of comfort, trust and psychological security (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

5. Parental participation in school activities
In addition to preparing their children for enrolment in multilingual schools, parents are involved in shaping school policies. This finding contributes to the

ongoing discourse on parental involvement, particularly about gender roles and the role of parents as key stakeholders.

Table 5. Parental Participation in School Activities

No	Statement	SD	A	SA
1	I regularly attend *Pesantren* activities such as seminars, parenting sessions, etc.	1	15	9
2	I take part in school-organized social service or fundraising events.	1	14	10
3	I actively contribute to the parent–teacher communication group.	0	13	10
4	I make time to attend graduation ceremonies, art performances, or competitions involving my child.	0	10	15
5	I provide feedback or suggestions to the *Pesantren* regarding my child's activities.	1	14	10

Survey data indicate a high level of parental involvement in various activities organized by the *Pesantren*. Fifteen respondents agreed and nine strongly agreed that they regularly attend school events, with only one respondent disagreeing. Participation in social service or fundraising events was also high, with 14 respondents agreeing and 10 strongly agreeing, while only one respondent reported non-participation. Parent–school communication also appeared robust, with 13 respondents agreeing and 10 strongly agreeing; no respondents expressed disagreement. Attendance at important events such as graduations, art performances and student competitions were also high, with 15 respondents strongly agreeing and 10 agreeing that they make time to attend. Similarly, when it came to providing input or suggestions regarding student activities, 14 respondents agreed and 10 strongly agreed, with only one not actively contributing. Overall, this data demonstrates strong parental commitment to supporting *Pesantren* activities. To corroborate these findings, the researcher conducted interviews with several parents.

> **Respondent**: *"Absolutely! We are always there for our children at the Pesantren. We enjoy participating in all the activities that the Pesantren organizes. It is important to us to show our children that we are involved in and invested in their education."*

Pesantren events and celebrations are an opportunity for parents to actively participate, as reflected in this response. Parents reported a high level of satisfaction, viewing their involvement as a means of instilling positive energy in their children. This, in turn, is believed to foster students' enthusiasm and motivation to participate more actively in their academic journey. These findings align with Epstein's (2018) framework, which emphasises that parental involvement in school life enhances students' motivation, attitudes, and academic engagement.

> **Interviewer**: *"How would you describe the role of parents in activities or events organized by the Pesantren?"*

> **Respondent**: *"I believe the role of parents is very important. Even though the children live in the dormitory, their parents' presence at school events motivates them in a special way."*

The respondent emphasises the importance of parents being present at Pesantren activities. Despite the child living in a boarding environment, the respondent believes that parents' attendance at school events provides valuable encouragement. This reflects the understanding that physical and emotional support from parents contributes to a child's motivation and well-being, thereby strengthening the parent–child bond despite physical separation. This finding is consistent with Epstein's (2018) framework on school, family and community partnerships, which emphasises the positive influence of parental involvement on students' academic success and socio-emotional development.

> *Interviewer: "Do you usually attend events organized by the Pesantren?"*
>
> *Respondent: "Unless something prevents me, I try my best to attend. For example, I always make time for language performances and Islamic holidays. I specially make time for events where my child is performing — I want them to know that I fully support their involvement."*

This response demonstrates the respondent's active commitment to attending Pesantren events when possible. The parent emphasizes the importance of being present at specific occasions, such as language showcases or religious celebrations, and expresses special attentiveness when the child is personally involved. This highlights strong parental support and the desire to provide emotional reinforcement, sending a clear message of encouragement and appreciation for the child's efforts. Parents' attendance at such events also strengthens emotional bonds and motivates students to engage actively in school life. As the findings of Haisraeli & Fogiel-Bijaoui (2021) highlight, parents from both schools expressed interest in becoming active members of the school community. They strive to ensure that the school provides a supportive and positive environment for their children.

> *Interviewer: "Do you think your child's participation in this has affected their enthusiasm for learning?"*
>
> *Respondent: "It has a significant impact. My child once said that they felt happier and more motivated to study when they knew I was present and involved. They said it made them feel appreciated and supported. So, in my opinion, even if parents cannot be involved every day, their participation still has a significant effect on their child."*

Analysis of this statement shows that the respondent believes that parental involvement in *Pesantren* activities significantly increases their child's motivation to learn. They refer to their child's expressed feelings of happiness and increased motivation to study when they realize their parent is present and engaged in school events. Their sense of being appreciated and supported highlights the importance of parental presence in fostering motivation and self-confidence. While daily involvement is not always feasible, the respondent affirms that periodic participation nonetheless has a profoundly positive impact on the child's learning experience at the *Pesantren*.

> *Interviewer: "Do you hope Pesantren continues to involve parents in its activities?"*

> **Respondent**: *"Absolutely. I really appreciate it when the school invites parents to events. It is an opportunity to observe our child's development, as well as strengthening relationships with teachers and other parents."*

This highlights the respondent's strong support for parents continuing to be involved in Pesantren activities. They recognise the value of these opportunities in staying informed about their child's progress and in building meaningful connections with educators and fellow parents. This reflects the broader understanding that collaboration between home and school is essential to student development, contributing to a more cohesive and supportive Pesantren community (Epstein, 2018; Anggadwita et al., 2024).

In bilingual boarding schools, parental involvement in their children's language education often focuses on personal development and setting an example, as many parents are actively working to improve their English and Arabic skills. Parental pride is a powerful motivator; driven by the sense of success they feel when their children excel in multiple languages, an achievement that reflects their deeply held cultural and religious values. Parents are optimistic about their children's future success and believe that language education opens doors to career opportunities and fosters cross-cultural understanding. Parents consider early intervention essential, initiating language exposure at a young age to establish a strong foundation. Parents also provide emotional support to help children navigate the challenges of language learning and demonstrate their commitment to their children's holistic development by participating in school events.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that parents play an active and multifaceted role in supporting their children's education at multilingual Islamic boarding schools. Quantitative survey results, reinforced by in-depth interviews, consistently highlight high levels of parental engagement across five core themes: aspirations for success; emotional support; pride in linguistic achievement; optimism for global opportunities; and participation in school activities. Parents regard their children's proficiency in Arabic and English as a marker of cultural and religious values, as well as a strategic resource for future academic and professional advancement. Their aspirations extend beyond personal success, envisaging their children as moral, multilingual leaders who can contribute to local and global communities.

Emotional support is particularly significant, with parents providing continuous motivation and encouragement despite the physical distance of boarding school life. Their active participation in school events and collaboration with institutions further emphasises their holistic approach to education, blending religious commitment, academic ambition, and emotional investment. Overall, this study affirms that parental involvement in multilingual pesantren settings is intentional and comprehensive, offering valuable insights into the intersection of multilingual education, parental roles, and identity formation within faith-based schooling in the globalised era.

AUTHOR STATEMENTS

Author contribution: **Oktarina Puspita Wardani** contributed to the conceptualisation and methodology, as well as the data collection, original draft writing, and review and editing. **Turahmat** was responsible for data analysis and validation, as well as writing and reviewing the draft. **Muhamad Afandi** contributed to the literature review, data analysis and supervision. **Dwi Wara Wahyuningrum** was involved in the methodology and visualisation, as well as writing and reviewing the draft. **Arini Febiantika Nirmala** contributed to the review and editing of the writing.

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