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The Effect of Service Quality and Education Costs on Parents' Decisions to Choose a School at Umar Bin Khathab Elementary School with Word of Mouth as a Moderating Variable

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Abstract. *This study aims to analyze the influence of service quality and education costs on parents' decision to choose a school at SDIT Umar Bin Khathab Kudus, as well as to examine the role of word of mouth as a moderating variable. This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory research type. The population in this study were parents or guardians of SDIT Umar Bin Khathab Kudus students with a sample of 170 respondents. Data collection was carried out through a questionnaire with an interval scale of 1–5, then analyzed using the Partial Least Square (PLS) method through SmartPLS software. The service quality variable was measured through indicators of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The education cost variable was measured through direct costs, indirect costs, and school operational costs. The word of mouth variable was measured through talkers, topics, tools, taking part, and tracking, while the parents' decision to choose a school was measured through the suitability of the school to the child's needs, confidence in the quality of education, readiness to enroll the child, and willingness to recommend the school. The results of the study indicate that service quality has a positive and significant influence on parents' decision to choose a school. Education costs also have a positive and significant influence on parents' decision to choose a school. Furthermore, word of mouth has been shown to strengthen the influence of service quality on parents' decision to choose a school and strengthen the influence of education costs on parents' decision to choose a school. These findings indicate that parents' decisions in choosing a school are not only determined by service quality and perceived costs, but are also strengthened by recommendations, experiences, and positive information from their social environment.*

Keywords: *Choosing; Decisions; Education; Quality; Service.*

1. Introduction

Education is a strategic sector in developing quality human resources.(Heru Nugriansah, 2020)In the era of global competition and rapid technological development, schools are required not only to be able to provide quality educational services, but also to be able to build trust and attract the interest of the community, especially parents as the main decision

makers in choosing a school for their children.(Heru Nugriansah, 2020)The increasing number of educational institutions, both public and private, has created increasingly fierce competition. This situation has pushed each school to implement effective marketing strategies to maintain its existence and increase student numbers.

SDIT Umar Bin Khathab Kudus is a private elementary school under the auspices of the Al-Fath Kudus Social Education Foundation, established in 2011 and located in the Kudus City District, Central Java. With an enrollment of 549 students in the 2025/2026 academic year, this school combines the national curriculum, the Integrated Islamic School curriculum, and the strengthening of literacy, numeracy, digital skills, and Islamic character as the main attraction for parents. Relatively adequate infrastructure, superior class programs such as tahfidz, language, and science-IT, and the support of competent teaching staff are factors that shape the public's positive perception of the school. However, as a private school, SDIT Umar Bin Khathab still faces competition with other schools in attracting prospective students, so a consistent marketing strategy and strengthening of the school's image are needed.

The new student admissions (SPMB) phenomenon at this school presents an interesting dynamic worth examining. In the 2025/2026 academic year, 161 prospective students registered, while the available capacity was only 113, resulting in 48 prospective students being rejected. This data indicates that public interest in the school remains quite high, but the student recruitment process is highly dependent on the effectiveness of the school's promotional strategies, outreach, and communication with the community. SPMB is implemented through various media, such as banners, social media, and direct visits to kindergartens in the surrounding area. However, limited information received by some parents remains an obstacle. This situation suggests that the school's marketing strategy needs to be continuously improved to reach a wider and more consistent community each year. Furthermore, the dynamics of educational service quality and public perception of the school also have the potential to influence new student admissions.

Table New Student Admissions Data (PMB)

School year	Number of Registrants	Amount Received	Difference (Not Accepted)	Acceptance Ratio (%)	Enrollment Growth (%)
2023/2024	112	93	19	83.04%	–
2024/2025	118	96	22	81.36%	+5.36%
2025/2026	161	113	48	70.19%	+36.44%

Data from the last three years shows a significant increase in the number of applicants at SDIT Umar Bin Khathab, particularly in the 2025/2026 academic year. In 2023/2024, the number of applicants was 112 students, increasing to 118 students in 2024/2025, an increase of approximately 5.36%. An even greater increase occurred in the 2025/2026 academic year, reaching 161 applicants, an increase of approximately 36.44% compared to the previous year. This increase indicates a growing public interest in the school, and a more positive image among parents.

In terms of the number of students accepted, there has been a gradual increase from 93 students in 2023/2024 to 96 students in 2024/2025 and a significant increase to 113 students in 2025/2026. This indicates an adjustment in school capacity in line with increasing public interest. However, the gap between the number of applicants and those accepted has also widened, from 19 students in 2023/2024 to 48 students in 2025/2026. This situation indicates that the school is becoming more selective or that its capacity is not yet fully able to accommodate all applicants. Judging from the acceptance ratio, the percentage of accepted students actually decreased from 83.04% in 2023/2024 to 70.19% in 2025/2026. This decrease in the ratio does not indicate a decrease in interest, but rather an increase in the number of applicants, not matched by an equal increase in capacity.

Competition between educational institutions is currently intensifying as public awareness of the importance of quality education for children's futures grows. In this context, parents, as the ones who determine school choice, will consider various aspects before making their decision. One crucial aspect is the school's implementation of a marketing mix, which encompasses educational programs or services, costs, location, promotion, human resources, service processes, and physical facilities.(Richardson, 2006). Implementing an effective and well-planned marketing strategy can strengthen a school's appeal, thereby building the interest and trust of prospective parents in choosing that school.

The phenomenon of SDIT Umar bin Khathab's suboptimal marketing can be explained through Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller's service marketing mix (7P) framework. From a product perspective, the school lacks strong differentiation and distinctive advantages embedded in public perception. In terms of price, education costs tend to be perceived as higher than those of public schools, while the value of benefits has not been fully communicated effectively. In terms of place, location and accessibility may not be strategic enough to reach a wider market. The most prominent problem is seen in promotion, where promotional strategies are still limited and do not utilize digital media optimally, resulting in low public awareness of the school.

Furthermore, aspects of people, processes, and physical evidence also influence competitiveness. The quality of the teaching staff and service interactions have not yet fully become selling points communicated to the public. The educational service process, both academic and administrative, has not provided a superior experience for parents and students. Meanwhile, in terms of physical evidence, and school facilities do not yet reflect the image of a leading educational institution. This can be seen from the classrooms that are not all equipped with air conditioning (AC) and student desks and chairs that are still not modern. Overall, the lack of synergy between the 7P elements has resulted in SDIT Umar bin Khathab being unable to build a strong positioning and value proposition, thus still struggling to compete with other leading schools.

Schools, as educational service institutions, also need to implement the marketing mix concept to attract potential students. The marketing mix, which encompasses product

(educational program), price (tuition fees), place (location and accessibility), promotion, people (teaching and administrative staff), process, and physical evidence, are important factors in shaping public perception of the quality of services provided by service providers.(Olazo, 2023)The right marketing strategy will help the company communicate its advantages so that it can influence consumer decisions in determining their purchasing behavior.(Idris, 2021).

In addition to the marketing mix, school image is also a significant factor influencing parents' decisions. School image is the perception or picture formed in the public mind regarding the school's quality, reputation, achievements, and environment. (Darmawan et al., 2017)A positive image will increase consumer trust, while a negative image can decrease consumer interest in choosing. A school's image can be shaped through various aspects, such as academic quality, student achievement, the professionalism of its teaching staff, facilities, and the values instilled in the educational process.(Harahap et al., 2024a)Therefore, efforts to build a good school image are an important part of the management strategy of educational institutions.

Various previous studies show that there are still differences in results (research gaps) regarding the factors that influence parents' decisions in choosing schools.

Table Research Inconsistency (Research Gap)

Independent Variable	Significant Influence	No Significant Impact
The Influence of Service Quality on Voting Decisions	(Nurohman et al., 2025; Pujiati et al., 2024a)	(Yudisman Al Ikhlas et al., 2025)
The Influence of Education Costs on Voting Decisions	(Harahap et al., 2024a)	(Herni Pujiati et al., 2024)
The Influence of Location on Voting Decisions	(Widhi Susanti et al., 2024)	(Nuryani Ruminda Harahap et al, 2024)

The results of research conducted by(Herni Pujiati et al., 2024);(Nurohman et al., 2025)found that service quality has a positive and significant influence on parents' decisions to choose a school. Meanwhile, the results of research by(Al Iklas et al., 2025a)found that service quality did not have a positive and significant influence on parents' decisions in choosing a school. The results of the research conducted by(Harahap et al., 2024a)found that education costs have a positive and significant influence on parents' decisions to choose a school. Meanwhile, the results of research by(Pujiati et al., 2024a), found that education costs did not have a positive and significant influence on parents' decisions to choose a school.

The results of research conducted by(Widhi Susanti et al., 2024)found that location has a positive and significant influence on parents' decisions in choosing a school. Meanwhile, the results of research by(Harahap et al., 2024a) found that location did not have a positive and significant influence on parents' decisions in choosing a school.

The inconsistency in the results of this study indicates that parents' decisions in choosing a school are not only determined by internal factors such as service quality, cost, or location, but are also influenced by external factors that shape parents' perceptions and beliefs. One factor that could potentially explain the differences in findings is word of mouth. Information obtained from the experiences of other parents, alumni, or the community is often considered more credible than official information from the school. Therefore, word of mouth can act as a moderating or strengthening variable in the relationship between the marketing mix and school image and parents' decisions in choosing a school.

When a school offers quality service, competitive pricing, a strategic location, and a positive image, its influence on parents' decisions will be strengthened if supported by positive word of mouth. Conversely, if the information circulating in the community is negative, the influence of these factors can be weakened. Word of mouth marketing is a form of promotion that occurs naturally when satisfied customers share their experiences and recommendations about a product or service with others, whether through verbal communication, writing, or social media.(Foroudi et al., 2021)Word of mouth strategy is considered very credible and effective because it is based on real consumer experiences, not formal advertising, and does not require direct promotional costs.(Lăzăroiu et al., 2020). Positive word of mouth generally arises as a result of a good customer experience and can strongly influence other people's decisions.(Han et al., 2019; Kristina & Sugiarto, 2020).

2. Research Methods

This research uses a quantitative approach with an associative explanatory research type, which aims to determine the relationship between two or more variables (Sugiyono, 2012). This research aims to explain testing hypothesis with the aim of confirming or strengthening the hypothesis with the hope of strengthening the theory used foundation. In this case, it is the quality of service, cost of education, word of mouth andparents' decisions in choosing a school. Source The data of this study includes primary and secondary data. Primary data sources are those obtained directly from the first source of information so that researchers can collect information relevant to their research (Ibeawuchi and Emmanuel (2015). Parents/guardians of students of SDIT Umar bin Khathab Kudus were used as the main data source in this study. The information collected came from responses to questionnaires regarding statements related toquality of service, cost of education*Word of Mouth*and parents' decisions in choosing schools.Meanwhile, secondary data is information obtained from data that has been researched and collected in relation to the study problems conducted by previous researchers, according to Nasution (2009). Secondary data is collected from internal school documents (school profiles, data on the number of applicants, etc.), and reference materials related to the variables studied in this study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Respondent Description

The research respondents were 170 parents/guardians of SDIT Umar Bin Khathab Kudus students. The research data were collected using a questionnaire distributed from May 2-15, 2026. Through a deep understanding of the demographic background of the respondents, researchers were able to obtain a stronger context in interpreting how external and internal factors influence their decision-making orientation. From the results of the questionnaire distribution, it was found that all questionnaires were completely filled out and worthy of further analysis. An overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents can be presented in the following table:

Table Description of Respondent Characteristics

No	Characteristics	Total Sample n = 170	
		Amount	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender		
	Man	17	10.0
	Woman	153	90.0
2.	Age		
	25 - 30 years	2	1.2
	31 - 40 years old	90	52.9
	41 - 50 years old	76	44.7
	>50 years	2	1.2
3.	Last education		
	Diploma	53	31.2
	Bachelor	102	60.0
	Postgraduate	15	8.8

Source: Results of research data processing (2026).

Based on gender, the majority of respondents in this study were female, amounting to 153 (90.0%), while male respondents represented only 17 (10.0%) of the total sample. The dominance of mothers (female) in filling out the research instrument strongly indicates that in the domestic context, mothers play a very central and active role in managing, considering, and executing decisions related to children's education. Psychologically and sociologically, mothers tend to be more detailed in assessing aspects of school service quality and cost appropriateness. The implications for the dependent variable indicate that parental loyalty or decisions in choosing schools at the elementary level are highly sensitive to perceptions formed by groups of mothers.

In terms of age, the respondent profile shows a mature psychological maturity, with the majority being in the 31–40 age group (90 (52.9%), followed by the 41–50 age group (76 (44.7%). Meanwhile, a very small percentage was found in the 25–30 age group (2 (1.2%) and the over 50 age group (2 (1.2%). This composition indicates that the majority of students' parents are in the productive age phase and are emotionally and financially mature. In the 31–50 age range, parents generally have a high level of critical awareness and rational expectations for their children's future. Linked to parents' decisions in choosing schools, this

mature age group no longer chooses schools simply based on following the crowd, but rather conducts in-depth evaluations of service quality and rationalization of education costs.

Educational background characteristics indicate that most students' parents have a relatively high level of education. Respondents were dominated by Bachelor's (S1) graduates (102) (60.0%), followed by Diploma graduates (53) (31.2%), and Postgraduate graduates (15) (8.8%). The fact that most respondents have a higher educational background reflects that the parent base of SDIT Umar Bin Khathab Kudus students is a well-educated community group. This high level of education is positively correlated with their high level of information literacy. Respondents with this academic profile tend to use a data-based and reputation-based approach before making their parenting decisions in choosing a school. Therefore, the high level of education of these respondents requires the school to continue to maintain the quality of its services, because the satisfaction of this group will be the main determinant that drives positive WOM, which ultimately significantly accelerates the decision of other parents to choose the school.

In this section, a descriptive analysis is conducted to obtain an overview of respondents' responses to the research variables. This analysis is conducted to obtain perceptions about respondents' tendencies to respond to the indicator items used to measure these variables and to determine the status of the variables studied at the research site. The variable descriptions are grouped into 3 categories, namely: low category, score = 1.00 – 2.33, medium category, score = 2.34 – 3.66 and high/good category, with score = 3.67 – 5.00. A detailed description of each research variable can be described in the following section:

Description of respondents' responses in the form of descriptive statistics of service quality variable data can be presented as follows:

Table Descriptive Statistics of Service Quality Variables

Variables and indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation
Quality of service	**3.92**	
1. Tangibility,	3.77	0.78
2. Reliability,	3.85	0.77
3. Responsiveness,	3.91	0.75
4. Assurance,	3.99	0.74
5. Empathy.	4.06	0.76

Based on the data tabulation results, the Service Quality variable cumulatively has an overall mean value of 3.92. Referring to the specified interval criteria, this value is in the range of 3.67–5.00, indicating that parents' perceptions of service quality at SDIT Umar Bin Khathab Kudus are in the high/good category. Specifically, the highest perception is demonstrated by the Empathy indicator with a mean value of 4.06, which falls within the high/good criteria. This achievement indicates that the school has demonstrated deep concern, personal attention, and optimal understanding of the specific needs of students and parents.

Conversely, the indicator with the lowest mean value is Tangibility (physical evidence) with a mean value of 3.77. Although this indicator is the lowest, it is still substantively in the high/good category. These results mean that the physical facilities, infrastructure, and visual appearance of the school have been deemed representative by parents, but still require ongoing attention and optimization to be on par with the excellence of other non-physical service dimensions.

Structural model testing (inner model) examines the relationship between latent constructs by examining the estimated path parameter coefficients and their significance levels (Ghozali, 2011). This procedure is carried out as a step in testing the proposed research hypothesis. The test yields output from the structural model of the loading factor construct, which will explain the influence of the constructs of service quality and education costs on parents' decisions to choose a school through word of mouth moderation.

In this case, data processing was performed using the Smart PLS software tool. The results of this data processing are shown in the following image:

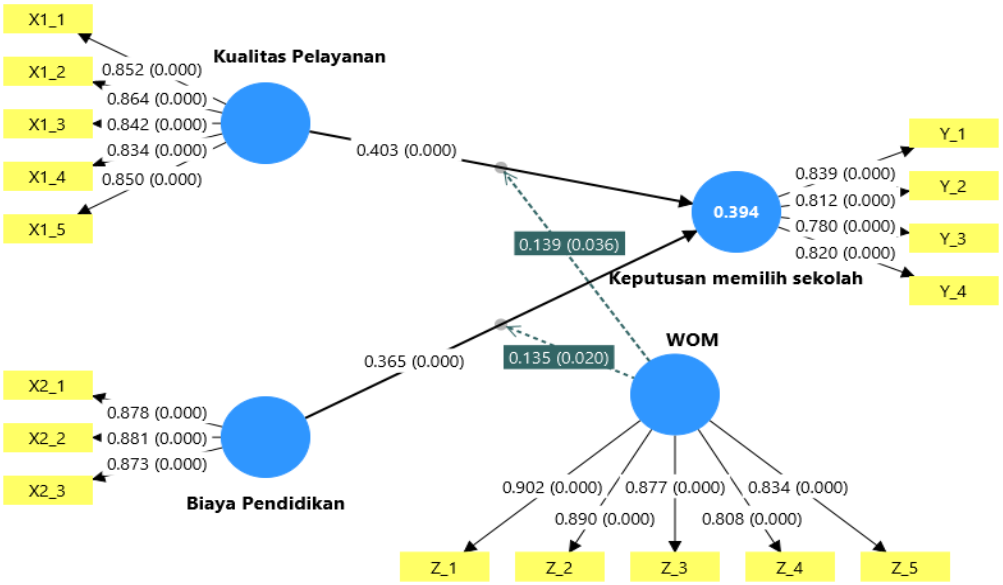


Figure Inner Model SEM-PLS Moderation
Source: Results of research data processing with Smart PLS 4.1.1 (2026)

Research hypothesis testing is conducted to determine whether a hypothesis is accepted or not by comparing the calculated t with the t table with the condition that if the calculated t > t table, then the hypothesis is accepted. The critical value used when the sample size is greater than 30 and the two-tailed test is 1.65 for a significance level of 10%, 1.96 for a significance level of 5% and 2.57 for a significance level of 1% (Marliana, 2019). In this case, to test the hypothesis used a significance level of 5% where the t table value is 1.96 (Ghozali & Latan, 2015). The results of testing the influence of each variable in this study can be presented in the following table:

Table Hypothesis Test Results

Influence	Original sample (O)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values	Information
Quality of Service -> Decision to choose a school	0.403	6,972	0.000	Accepted
Education Costs -> Decision to choose a school	0.365	6.124	0.000	Accepted
WOM x Service Quality -> Decision to choose a school	0.139	2,092	0.036	Accepted
WOM x Education Cost -> Decision to choose a school	0.135	2,319	0.020	Accepted

Source: Primary data processing with Smart PLS (2026)

Decisions are made based on the calculated statistical test values and predetermined significance levels. Hypothesis testing is performed by comparing the predetermined t-table with the calculated t-value generated from the PLS calculation. Based on the data processing results table above, the results of each proposed hypothesis test can be identified as follows:

1) Hypothesis Testing 1 (H1)

In testing hypothesis 1, the original sample estimate value for the influence of service quality on parents' decisions to choose a school was 0.403. This value indicates that service quality has an influence.positive effect on parents' decision to choose a school. This result is supported by the calculated t value of 6.972 > t table (1.96) and the p value of 0.000 < 0.05. Thus, it can be said that service quality has a positive and significant influence on parents' decision to choose a school. Therefore, the first hypothesis stating that "Service quality has an influence on parents' decision in choosing a school" can be accepted.

2) Testing Hypothesis 2 (H2)

In testing hypothesis 2, the original sample estimate value of the influence of education costs on parents' decisions to choose schools was 0.365. This value indicates that education costs have a positive influence on parents' decisions to choose schools. These results are also supported by the calculated t value of 6.124 > t table (1.96) and a p value of 0.000 < 0.05. This means that education costs have been proven to provide a significant contribution in increasing parents' decisions to choose schools. Thus, the second hypothesis which states that "Education costs have an influence on parents' decisions in choosing schools" can be accepted.

3) Testing Hypothesis 3 (H3)

Based on the results of hypothesis 3 testing, the original sample estimate value of the interaction variable (Word of mouth x Service quality) was 0.139. This value indicates a positive direction of influence. The test results are also strengthened by the calculated t value of 2.092 > t table (1.96) and a p value of 0.036 < 0.05. This proves that Word of mouth significantly moderates the influence of Service quality on parents' decisions to choose schools. This means that Word of mouth can strengthen the influence of Service quality on

parents' decisions to choose schools. Thus, the third hypothesis which states that "Word of mouth moderates the influence of service quality on parents' decisions in choosing schools" can be accepted.

4) Testing Hypothesis 4 (H4)

In testing hypothesis 4, the original sample estimate value of the effect of the interaction variable (word of mouth x Cost of education) was obtained at 0.135. This result is supported by the calculated t value of 2.319 > t table (1.96) and a p value of 0.020 < 0.05. This proves that Word of mouth significantly moderates the effect of education costs on parents' decisions to choose schools. This means that Word of mouth can strengthen the influence of parents' perceptions of education costs on parents' decisions to choose schools. Thus, the fourth hypothesis which states that "Word of Mouth moderates the effect of education costs on parents' decisions in choosing schools" can be accepted.

3.2. Discussion

1) The Influence of Service Quality on Parents' Decisions in Choosing Schools

The results of the study indicate that service quality has a positive and significant influence on parents' decisions to choose a school. Previous research has shown that service quality has a significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions.(Okta Pradita et al., 2020)As stated by several previous researchers, service quality has a significant role in increasing purchasing decisions.(Rahmasari et al., 2022).

Quality of service in this study it was measured from the reflection of five indicatorsnamely the indicators of Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. These five aspects have been proven to be able to improve Parents' decision to choose a schoolas measured by the reflection of four indicatorsnamely indicatorsSuitability of the school to the child's needs, Confidence in the quality of education, Readiness of parents to enroll their child, and Recommending the school to others. The service quality variable shows that the indicator with the highest outer loading is reliability. Meanwhile, for the variable of parents' decision to choose a school, the indicator with the highest outer loading is the school's suitability to the child's needs.

These findings indicate that the reliability of school services is a crucial factor in shaping parents' confidence that the school meets their child's needs. This means that when a school consistently delivers services in a timely, accurate, and reliable manner, and in accordance with its promises, parents will be more confident that the school can meet their child's educational needs, character development, learning comfort, and future prospects. Therefore, the greater the reliability demonstrated by a school, the stronger the parents' decision to choose the school, as they will assess that the school is truly relevant to their child's needs.

2) The influence of education costs on parents' decisions in choosing a school

The results of this study indicate that education costs have a positive and significant influence on parents' decisions in choosing a school. As several previous studies have shown, the decision to choose a school is influenced by education costs.(Al Iklas et al., 2025b; Fattah & Gautama, 2017; Pujiati et al., 2024b; Tjay et al., 2025)Thus, parents' decision to choose a school is a multidimensional evaluation process in which the cost of education is a primary consideration, along with the quality of service and the school's reputation.

Cost of education in this study it was measured from three indicatorsnamely indicatorsDirect Costs, Indirect Costs, and School Operational Costs. These three aspects have been proven to be able to increase Parents' decision to choose a schoolas measured by the reflection of four indicatorsnamely indicatorsSuitability of the school to the child's needs, Confidence in the quality of education, Readiness of parents to enroll their child, and Recommending the school to others.

3) Moderation of Word of Mouth in the influence of service quality on parents' decisions in choosing a school

The results of this study indicate that word of mouth significantly and positively moderates the influence of service quality on parents' decisions to choose a school. This means that word of mouth can strengthen the influence of service quality on parents' decisions to choose a school.

Quality of service in this study it was measured from the reflection of five indicatorsnamely the indicators of Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. Meanwhile, parents' decisions in choosing a schoolas measured by the reflection of four indicatorsnamely indicatorsSchool suitability to child's needs, Confidence in the quality of education, Parental readiness to enroll child, and Recommendation of the school to others. Then, Word of mouthmeasured from the reflection of five indicatorsnamely indicators*Talkers*(speaker), Topics, Tools, Taking part, and Tracking.

The word of mouth variable shows that the indicator with the highest outer loading value is the talkers, meaning the role of people who convey information, recommendations, experiences, or testimonials about the school is the most powerful aspect in shaping word of mouth. For the service quality variable, the indicator with the highest outer loading value is reliability, which reflects the school's ability to provide services consistently, accurately, trustworthy, and in accordance with parents' expectations. Meanwhile, for the variable of parents' decisions in choosing a school, the most dominant indicator is the school's suitability to the child's needs.

These findings indicate that the stronger the role of talkers in conveying positive information about a school, the greater the influence of reliability on parental decisions, particularly in assessing whether the school is suitable for their child's needs. This means that when parents

receive positive stories, recommendations, or experiences from trusted sources, such as guardians, family, friends, or the surrounding community, their perception of the school's reliability will be strengthened. School reliability, demonstrated through consistent service, an orderly learning process, good communication, and the school's commitment to meeting students' needs, will be more easily believed when reinforced by positive word of mouth. Thus, talkers play a role in reinforcing parents' confidence that the quality of school services, particularly the reliability aspect, is truly capable of supporting their children's needs, development, and comfort in the educational process.

4) Word of Mouth moderation moderates the influence of education costs on parents' decisions in choosing a school.

Research shows that word of mouth significantly moderates the influence of education costs on parents' school choice decisions. This means that word of mouth can strengthen the influence of parents' perceptions of education costs on their school choice decisions.

Cost of education in this study it was measured from three indicatorsnamely indicatorsDirect Costs, Indirect Costs, and School Operational Costs. Meanwhile, parents' decisions regarding choosing a schoolas measured by the reflection of four indicatorsnamely indicatorsSchool suitability to child's needs, Confidence in the quality of education, Parental readiness to enroll child, and Recommendation of the school to others. Then, Word of mouthmeasured from the reflection of five indicatorsnamely indicators*Talkers*(speaker), Topics, Tools, Taking part, and Tracking.

The measurement results show that the Talkers indicator is the strongest indicator in reflecting the word of mouth variable. Meanwhile, in the education cost variable, the most dominant indicator is indirect costs, and in the parental decision to choose a school, the strongest indicator is the school's suitability to the child's needs. This finding indicates that the presence of active, credible speakers with positive experiences with schools can strengthen the influence of indirect costs on parents' decisions in choosing a school that is considered appropriate for their child's needs. This means that even though parents consider various additional costs beyond the main costs of education, such as transportation, school supplies, supporting activities, and other needs, positive information conveyed by trusted parties can shape the perception that these costs are commensurate with the benefits received by the child. Thus, the better the quality of word of mouth through the role of talkers, the more likely parents are to perceive that the indirect costs incurred are still reasonable because the school is able to optimally meet the academic, social, character, and developmental needs of the child.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the discussion and proof of the hypothesis, the answers to the research questions are as follows: The results of the study indicate that service quality has a positive and significant influence on parents' decision to choose a school. This means that the

better the quality of service provided by a school, the more likely parents are to choose that school as their child's education. Service quality, which includes reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible evidence, can shape parents' positive perceptions of the school's professionalism. When parents perceive that a school is capable of providing fast, friendly, informative, safe, and appropriate service to their children and families, their trust in the school will increase. Thus, service quality is an important factor that drives parents' confidence in making decisions to enroll their children. The results of this study indicate that education costs have a positive and significant influence on parents' decision to choose a school. This means that education costs are not merely viewed as an expense, but also as a consideration of the value or benefits that children will receive during their education.

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