

Shifting community educational orientation toward *madrasah diniyah*: A case study at Madrasah Diniyah Nurul Huda Pilang

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Abstract

The decline in community participation in *madrasah diniyah* has primarily been examined through the identification of contributing factors, while limited attention has been given to explaining how these factors interact to shape shifts in community educational orientation. This study aims to analyze community perceptions of the declining interest in attending Madrasah Diniyah Nurul Huda Pilang and to explain the process through which educational orientation shifts in determining children's educational priorities. A qualitative case study approach was employed using in-depth interviews, observations, documentation, and the interactive data analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal that declining participation is influenced by the increasing priority given to formal education, parental considerations, changes in children's activities in the digital era, and the need for instructional adaptation within *madrasah diniyah*. The interaction of these factors has shifted community educational orientation, positioning *madrasah diniyah* as a complementary rather than a primary form of education. This study contributes a conceptual model of shifting community educational orientation, thereby enriching the literature on non-formal Islamic education.

Keywords: Community perceptions; *Madrasah diniyah*; Educational orientation; Non-formal Islamic education; Community participation.

Abstrak

Menurunnya partisipasi masyarakat dalam *madrasah diniyah* telah banyak dikaji dari perspektif faktor-faktor penyebab, tetapi masih terbatas penelitian yang menjelaskan bagaimana berbagai faktor tersebut saling berinteraksi hingga membentuk pergeseran orientasi pendidikan masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis persepsi masyarakat terhadap rendahnya minat mengikuti Madrasah Diniyah Nurul Huda Pilang serta menjelaskan proses terbentuknya pergeseran orientasi pendidikan dalam menentukan prioritas pendidikan anak. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dokumentasi, serta analisis data interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rendahnya partisipasi masyarakat dipengaruhi oleh meningkatnya prioritas terhadap pendidikan formal, pertimbangan orang tua, perubahan aktivitas anak pada era digital, serta tuntutan adaptasi pembelajaran di *madrasah diniyah*. Interaksi berbagai faktor tersebut membentuk pergeseran orientasi pendidikan masyarakat yang menempatkan *madrasah diniyah* sebagai pendidikan yang bersifat komplementer, bukan lagi sebagai pilihan utama. Temuan ini memperkaya kajian pendidikan Islam nonformal melalui pengembangan model konseptual mengenai pergeseran orientasi pendidikan masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: Persepsi masyarakat; *Madrasah diniyah*; Orientasi pendidikan; Pendidikan Islam nonformal; Partisipasi masyarakat.

Introduction

Madrasah diniyah is a non-formal Islamic educational institution that plays a vital role in strengthening religious understanding, fostering *akhlāq* (moral character), and instilling moral values in children from an early age (Nurdianzah et al., 2024). It has long complemented formal education by providing instruction in the Qur'an, *fiqh*, *'aqidah*, and other Islamic subjects that cannot be taught comprehensively in formal schools (Yugo et al., 2024). Consequently, madrasah diniyah has become one of the key pillars in nurturing children's religious character within the community (Mustain & Bakar, 2025). However, rapid social transformation has been accompanied by a declining trend in community participation in non-formal Islamic education across various regions. A similar phenomenon has occurred at Madrasah Diniyah Nurul Huda Pilang in Pasuruan Regency, where student enrollment has continued to decline despite the community's continued recognition of the importance of religious education for children's development.

The decline in community participation in madrasah diniyah cannot be understood merely as a reflection of diminishing concern for religious education (Latif & Hafid, 2021). Changes in family life have reshaped the way parents determine their children's educational priorities, including the increasing demands of formal schooling, heavier academic workloads, changing parenting practices, and the rapid development of digital technology that has transformed children's daily routines (Sanders & Turner, 2018). Under these circumstances, families must carefully weigh multiple considerations when selecting educational pathways that best meet their children's needs. As a result, formal education has increasingly been positioned as the primary educational priority, while non-formal Islamic education has gradually come to be regarded as a complementary option whose implementation depends on time availability, the child's condition, and family circumstances.

This phenomenon suggests that declining community participation cannot be adequately explained solely by identifying individual causal factors. The interplay among community perceptions, parental considerations, shifting educational values, and broader social dynamics creates a decision-making process that is far more complex than issues of limited time or declining interest in religious education alone (Hart, 2019). These transformations indicate a broader shift in how families construct the hierarchy of their children's educational priorities in response to evolving social demands. Therefore, understanding declining community participation requires greater attention to the process through which family educational orientation is formed, thereby providing a more comprehensive explanation of the relationships among the factors that shape educational decision-making.

Community participation in non-formal Islamic education has been widely examined in previous studies. Haryati et al. (2024) found that parents' perceptions of the benefits

of religious education significantly influence their decisions to enroll their children in madrasah diniyah. Kulachai et al. (2025) reported that instructional quality, innovative teaching methods, and institutional support contribute substantially to student participation, although their discussion remained focused primarily on internal institutional conditions. García-Carrión et al. (2018) further demonstrated that families' socioeconomic conditions, time constraints, and the growing demands of formal education are important factors influencing declining community participation. Nevertheless, these studies have not fully explained how such factors interact to produce shifts in community educational orientation when determining children's educational priorities within a specific local context.

Based on this research gap, this study aims to analyze community perceptions of the declining interest in attending Madrasah Diniyah Nurul Huda Pilang while explaining the process through which shifts in community educational orientation emerge in determining children's educational priorities. This study is important because it offers a more comprehensive perspective on declining community participation, viewing it not merely as the consequence of isolated causal factors but as the result of changes in the ways families prioritize education amid ongoing social transformation. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on non-formal Islamic education by proposing a conceptual model of shifting community educational orientation and to provide a foundation for madrasah diniyah in developing more adaptive strategies to maintain their relevance and enhance community participation.

Method

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore community perceptions of the declining interest in attending Madrasah Diniyah Nurul Huda, located in Pilang Village, Susukanrejo District, Pasuruan Regency (Hamel et al., 1993). This approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of community perceptions, considerations, and decision-making processes in determining children's educational priorities. Participants were selected through purposive sampling and included the head of the madrasah, teachers, parents, and community leaders who possessed relevant knowledge and experience regarding the phenomenon under investigation. The interview guide was developed by synthesizing several theoretical perspectives, including perception theory (Robbins & Judge, 2017), decision-making theory (Simon, 1997), value orientation theory (Schwartz, 1992), and the theory of modernity (Giddens, 1990). These four theoretical frameworks served as the basis for constructing interview indicators concerning community perceptions of Madrasah Diniyah, considerations in determining children's educational priorities, and shifts in educational orientation influenced by social dynamics.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis to obtain comprehensive information regarding the phenomenon under investigation. The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation to enhance the credibility of the findings. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analytical process was conducted iteratively until the major themes emerged and were subsequently synthesized into a conceptual model explaining the relationships among the factors shaping community perceptions of the declining interest in attending Madrasah Diniyah.

Results and Discussion

Community perceptions of madrasah diniyah

Madrasah diniyah continues to occupy an important position in the community as an institution that nurtures children's religious character from an early age. Nearly all participants acknowledged that religious education provided in formal schools cannot fully replace the role of *madrasah diniyah* in teaching Qur'anic literacy, acts of worship, and *akhlāq* (moral character). The institution is therefore regarded as a complementary educational setting that provides children with a strong Islamic foundation amid the growing complexity of modern life. As one parent (P-1) stated, "*It is certainly important. Children still need to learn to recite the Qur'an and develop good moral character. Formal schools do offer religious education, but the time allocated is limited. That is why I believe madrasah diniyah is still necessary.*" This statement indicates that the community continues to place considerable trust in the role of *madrasah diniyah* in fostering children's religious character.

Nevertheless, these positive perceptions are not always reflected in parents' decisions to enroll their children in *madrasah diniyah*. Parents recognize the importance of religious education, yet in practice they must adjust to their children's increasingly demanding daily schedules. This situation reveals a gap between educational beliefs and actual decisions regarding children's education. Another parent (P-2) explained, "*I actually want my child to continue attending madrasah diniyah, but by the time school finishes it is already late in the afternoon, and there is still homework to complete. Sometimes my child is simply too tired, so I have not enrolled them.*" This finding suggests that declining participation does not stem from rejection of *madrasah diniyah*, but rather from shifting family priorities in managing children's time and daily activities.

This shift in educational orientation is also evident at the broader community level. Formal education is increasingly viewed as the primary pathway for securing children's future, while *madrasah diniyah* is gradually being positioned as supplementary education that children attend only when circumstances permit. This changing perspective indicates that educational success is increasingly associated with

academic achievement and progression through the formal education system. A community leader (CL) explained, "*In the past, almost every child went to the madrasah to study the Qur'an in the afternoon. Today, many parents focus more on formal schooling because they believe it is more important for their children's future.*" This statement demonstrates that changes in community perceptions are influenced not only by the perceived importance of religious education but also by evolving social expectations within the community.

A similar perspective was expressed by the madrasah itself, which has directly witnessed changes in community attitudes over recent years. The head of the madrasah (HM) explained that student enrollment has gradually declined as parents' educational priorities have shifted. According to the head, although the community continues to value the existence of *madrasah diniyah*, greater attention is now directed toward formal education and various supporting educational activities. The head of the madrasah (HM) stated, "*Parents still support madrasah diniyah, but nowadays most of them prioritize formal schooling. As a result, the number of students is no longer as high as it was a few years ago.*" This statement suggests that the principal challenge faced by *madrasah diniyah* is not the erosion of public trust but rather the shift in families' educational priorities.

Overall, these findings reveal a paradox in the way the community perceives *madrasah diniyah*. On the one hand, the institution continues to be regarded as essential for cultivating *akhlāq*, religious understanding, and children's character. On the other hand, this positive perception is not consistently followed by the decision to enroll children because formal education is considered more urgent in preparing them for the future. Consequently, the central issue lies not in declining public appreciation of *madrasah diniyah* but in the changing educational orientation within families. This shift provides the starting point for understanding the various factors contributing to the declining interest in attending Madrasah Diniyah Nurul Huda.

Factors contributing to the declining interest in attending madrasah diniyah

The decline in community interest in attending *madrasah diniyah* has not occurred suddenly but is the cumulative result of various changes within family life and the broader educational environment. The issue most frequently raised by participants was children's increasingly busy schedules following formal schooling. Longer school hours have left children with limited opportunities to participate in religious learning activities during the afternoon. This situation has also contributed to a steady decline in student attendance over the years. A madrasah teacher (T) explained, "*Many children arrive already exhausted. Some return home from school late in the afternoon, still have homework to complete, and some even attend private tutoring. As a result, many choose not to attend madrasah diniyah.*" This finding indicates that the growing demands of formal

education have significantly reduced the time available for children to participate regularly in non-formal Islamic education.

These changes have also influenced how parents determine their children's educational priorities. Amid increasingly demanding academic expectations, most parents devote greater attention to activities associated with formal schooling. Religious education continues to be regarded as important; however, its implementation must be adjusted to the child's condition and the time available. One parent (P-2) explained, *"I really want my child to continue studying at the madrasah, but when they come home late every day and still have school assignments to finish, I feel sorry about making them go out again."* This statement suggests that parents' decisions are not driven by rejection of *madrasah diniyah*, but rather by practical considerations regarding their children's ability to cope with multiple educational commitments simultaneously.

As children's free time becomes increasingly limited, technological development presents an additional challenge to the sustainability of *madrasah diniyah*. Time spent resting at home is often devoted to using smartphones, playing online games, or accessing social media rather than participating in religious learning activities. Nearly all participants identified this shift in daily routines as an increasingly common phenomenon. A community leader (CL) remarked, *"Nowadays, once children start using their phones, it becomes difficult to persuade them to attend Qur'anic classes. Parents are also not always able to supervise them because they are busy as well."* This finding indicates that technological advancement has not only transformed how children spend their leisure time but has also reduced the extent of family involvement in encouraging them to attend *madrasah diniyah*.

On the other hand, the madrasah itself recognizes that changes in students' characteristics require innovation in the teaching and learning process. Today's children are accustomed to visual, interactive, and dynamic media, making conventional instructional methods less effective in sustaining their attention. The head of the madrasah (HM) explained, *"We continue trying to improve our teaching so that children become more interested. If we only read classical texts or rely on lectures, they become bored quickly because they are now accustomed to more engaging forms of learning."* This statement demonstrates that declining community participation is also associated with the need for *madrasah diniyah* to continuously adapt its instructional practices to the characteristics of learners in the digital era.

Taken together, the perspectives of teachers, parents, community leaders, and the head of the madrasah demonstrate that the declining interest in attending *madrasah diniyah* is shaped by a series of interconnected factors. The increasing demands of formal schooling have altered families' educational priorities, while technological development has further reduced children's interest in participating in religious

learning outside school. At the same time, *madrasah diniyah* is challenged to provide more engaging and relevant learning experiences that meet the needs of contemporary learners. These interconnected conditions indicate that declining community participation is not the result of diminishing trust in *madrasah diniyah*, but rather a consequence of broader social changes that influence how families manage their time, establish educational priorities, and support their children's development.

Shifting community educational orientation in determining children's educational priorities

The decline in community participation in *madrasah diniyah* is often understood as a consequence of increasing demands from formal education, changing parenting practices, and the rapid advancement of digital technology. While these explanations identify the factors influencing families' educational decisions, they do not fully explain why *madrasah diniyah* continues to be regarded as important despite the continuing decline in student participation. This phenomenon suggests that the issue extends beyond changes in the social environment and reflects a broader shift in community educational orientation when determining children's educational priorities. Accordingly, this study argues that declining community participation should not be interpreted as evidence of diminishing trust in *madrasah diniyah*, but rather as a consequence of shifts in family educational orientation in response to evolving social dynamics.

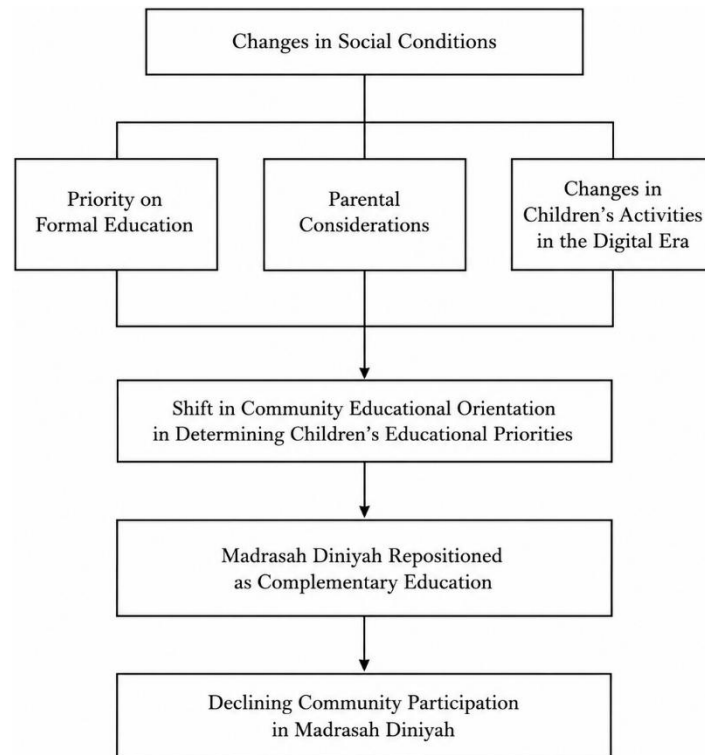


Figure 1. Shift in community educational orientation in determining children's educational priorities

Source: Developed by the authors (2026).

Figure 1 illustrates the interrelationships among changing social conditions, the increasing priority given to formal education, parental considerations, and changes in children's activities in the digital era, all of which collectively contribute to a shift in community educational orientation. This shift subsequently repositions *madrasah diniyah* as a complementary form of education, resulting in declining community participation. The conceptual model demonstrates that this transformation does not occur directly but emerges through the interaction of multiple interconnected factors. By integrating these components into a single analytical framework, the model provides a more comprehensive understanding of how shifts in community educational orientation are formed.

This interpretation is consistent with Walgito's (2010) theory of perception, which argues that perception forms the basis for individual judgments and actions. In the context of this study, the community continues to perceive *madrasah diniyah* as an important institution for religious education and character formation; however, this perception interacts with various other considerations when families determine their children's educational priorities. Consequently, educational decisions are no longer based solely on the intrinsic value of *madrasah diniyah*, but also on its perceived compatibility with changing social needs. Therefore, Figure 1 functions not only as a conceptual synthesis of the findings but also demonstrates that declining community participation results from a gradual shift in educational orientation rather than from a single causal factor.

The shift in community educational orientation illustrated in Figure 1 is first reflected in families' growing tendency to prioritize formal education over *madrasah diniyah*. This study found that formal education is regarded as the primary educational need because it is perceived to contribute more directly to academic achievement, educational continuity, and children's future prospects. In contrast, although *madrasah diniyah* continues to be valued for fostering character and religious understanding, participation is adjusted according to the time remaining after the demands of formal education have been met. Similarly, Liu and Bray (2020) found that the increasing demands of formal education have altered family decision-making regarding children's educational priorities. However, the present study provides a deeper explanation by demonstrating that this change is driven not by declining trust in *madrasah diniyah*, but by a shift in family educational orientation as an adaptive response to social change. This finding reinforces Walgito's (2010) argument that perception underlies individuals' attitudes and actions when confronted with multiple alternatives that are all considered important. Consequently, family decisions reflect a reordering of educational priorities rather than a change in their evaluation of *madrasah diniyah*.

Parental considerations represent another important factor reinforcing this shift in educational orientation. This study found that parents continue to value religious education, yet practical considerations—including demanding school schedules, children's academic workload, their physical and psychological well-being, and effective time management—have become the primary basis for educational decision-making. As a result, formal education is more frequently prioritized, while participation in *madrasah diniyah* depends on children's capacity to undertake additional learning activities. Unlike Heggeness (2020), who explained parental decisions primarily as a consequence of time constraints, this study demonstrates that such decisions represent families' adaptation to changing educational demands in an increasingly competitive environment. This perspective is consistent with Epstein (2011), who emphasizes the central role of families in shaping children's educational pathways through strategic decision-making. Therefore, declining participation in *madrasah diniyah* is more appropriately understood as the outcome of families' educational priority-setting rather than as evidence of declining concern for religious education.

These changes are further reinforced by shifts in children's daily activities in the digital era. This study found that children's time is occupied not only by formal schooling but also by academic assignments, supplementary educational activities, and increasingly intensive engagement with digital media. Consequently, opportunities to participate in non-formal education, including *madrasah diniyah*, have become increasingly limited. These findings extend those of Oliveira et al. (2021), who identified technological development as the principal cause of declining community participation. In contrast, the present study demonstrates that technology functions primarily as an accelerating factor that reinforces educational orientation shifts already initiated by families' prioritization of formal education. This perspective is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, which explains that individual development is shaped by interactions among multiple environmental systems. Thus, changes in children's daily activities should not be viewed as an isolated factor but rather as part of broader social transformations that collectively reshape community educational orientation.

The combined effects of the growing priority assigned to formal education, parental considerations, and changes in children's activities ultimately produce a shift in community educational orientation regarding children's educational priorities. This study demonstrates that this transformation occurs gradually through families' continuous adaptation to evolving social demands rather than through sudden change. Under these circumstances, religious education continues to be regarded as an essential component of children's character development, yet its implementation is increasingly adjusted to accommodate educational needs considered more urgent. These findings support Seghers et al. (2019), who argued that social change influences

family educational decision-making. However, the present study provides a more comprehensive explanation by demonstrating that these transformations affect not only educational choices but also reshape the hierarchy through which families prioritize children's educational needs. This interpretation is consistent with Bourdieu's (1986) view that family educational choices are inseparable from strategies for adapting to prevailing social conditions. Consequently, the shift in educational orientation identified in this study should be understood as an adaptive response to changing social environments rather than as a rejection of religious educational values.

This shift in educational orientation has consequently altered how the community positions *madrasah diniyah* within children's educational system. This study found that *madrasah diniyah* continues to be valued for its essential role in fostering *akhlāq*, character, and religious understanding; however, it is no longer regarded as the primary educational priority as it once was. Instead, it has been repositioned as a complementary component of formal education, making its continuity highly dependent on children's available time and capacity to participate in additional learning activities. Unlike Theodori and Robinson (2019), who concluded that declining participation reflects diminishing interest in religious education, the present study demonstrates that what has changed is not the value attributed to *madrasah diniyah*, but rather its position within families' educational priority structure. This interpretation is consistent with Coleman (1988), who argues that family educational decisions are influenced by available resources and broader social considerations. Therefore, declining community participation should not be interpreted as evidence of the weakening existence of *madrasah diniyah*, but as a consequence of changes in family educational orientation.

The conceptual model developed through Figure 1 offers a more comprehensive perspective for understanding the phenomenon of declining community participation in *madrasah diniyah*. Previous discussions have primarily focused on identifying individual causal factors, whereas this study demonstrates that these factors interact to produce a gradual shift in community educational orientation. The principal contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that declining participation is not the result of a single dominant factor or diminishing appreciation of religious education, but rather the outcome of changes in how families prioritize education in response to evolving social dynamics. This perspective not only broadens existing understanding of declining participation in *madrasah diniyah* but also suggests that efforts to increase participation cannot rely solely on strengthening the institution's public image. Instead, adapting educational programs, learning schedules, and service delivery to better accommodate families' needs is essential for ensuring that *madrasah diniyah* remains relevant amid ongoing shifts in community educational orientation.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that declining community participation in *madrasah diniyah* cannot be understood solely as a consequence of the increasing demands of formal education, parental considerations, or changes in children's activities in the digital era. Rather, these three factors interact to produce a shift in community educational orientation in determining children's educational priorities. Although the community continues to regard *madrasah diniyah* as an important institution for fostering *akhlāq* and religious understanding, changing social conditions have encouraged families to prioritize formal education. Consequently, *madrasah diniyah* has shifted from being an integral part of children's daily educational experience to serving a complementary role. Therefore, declining community participation reflects a transformation in family educational orientation rather than a decline in public trust in *madrasah diniyah*.

This study makes a conceptual contribution by proposing that declining community participation in *madrasah diniyah* should be understood as the result of a shift in educational orientation shaped by the interaction of multiple social factors rather than by a single isolated cause. This perspective extends previous research, which has generally focused on identifying individual causal factors. Nevertheless, the study is limited to a single research site, and its findings therefore cannot be generalized to different social and cultural contexts. Future research is recommended to include broader geographical settings, compare the characteristics of multiple *madrasah diniyah*, or employ a mixed methods approach to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of community educational orientation toward non-formal Islamic educational institutions.

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