



Modeling the Influence of Social Media-Based Educational Marketing on Prospective Students' Enrollment Intentions

¹Basri*, ²Ilham, ³Widyatmike Gede Mulawarman, ³Nurlaili

Corresponding Author: *basripengawaskota@gmail.com

¹ Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

² Education Office, East Kutai Regency, Indonesia

³ Mulawarman University, Samarinda, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article history

Received 13 April 2026

Revised 01 July 2026

Accepted 05 July 2026

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of social media-based educational marketing strategies in increasing prospective students' interest in madrasahs in Samarinda City by considering the roles of content quality, usage intensity, and engagement, as well as institutional image as a mediating variable. This research employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory design and is analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The sample consists of 150 respondents, including prospective students and parents who have accessed madrasah social media. The results indicate that content quality ($\beta = 0.32$; $t = 4.85$), usage intensity ($\beta = 0.28$; $t = 3.92$), and engagement ($\beta = 0.35$; $t = 5.10$) have positive and significant effects on institutional image, with engagement being the most dominant factor. Furthermore, content quality ($\beta = 0.21$; $t = 2.98$), usage intensity ($\beta = 0.18$; $t = 2.45$), and engagement ($\beta = 0.22$; $t = 3.10$) also significantly influence prospective students' interest. Institutional image has the strongest effect on interest ($\beta = 0.41$; $t = 6.25$). The R^2 values of 0.68 for institutional image and 0.72 for interest indicate strong explanatory power of the model. In addition, institutional image is proven to act as a partial mediator in the relationship between social media marketing strategies and prospective students' interest. This study concludes that the effectiveness of social media-based educational marketing is strongly determined by content quality, consistency of use, and audience engagement in building a positive institutional image. The findings highlight the importance of interactive and integrated digital strategies to enhance the attractiveness of madrasahs in the digital era.

Keywords

Educational Marketing
Madrasah Image
SEM-PLS
Social Media
Student Interest

This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY-SA](#) license.

**Introduction**

The rapid development of information and communication technology has accelerated digital transformation across various sectors, including education. According to the Digital 2025 Global Overview Report by DataReportal, the number of global social media users has reached 5.31 billion, representing approximately 64.7% of the world's population, while the average daily time spent on social media exceeds 2 hours and 20 minutes. This trend demonstrates that digital platforms have become an integral part of communication, information dissemination, and decision-making processes worldwide. In parallel, UNESCO emphasizes that digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped how educational institutions communicate with stakeholders and deliver educational services. Consequently, digital transformation has influenced not only teaching and learning processes but also the ways educational institutions design marketing strategies to attract prospective students [1]-[3].

In the face of increasingly intense competition among educational institutions, including public schools and madrasahs, there is a growing need for innovative, effective, and adaptive marketing approaches that align with the characteristics of the digital generation. Educational institutions can no longer rely solely on conventional promotional methods but must strategically utilize digital technologies, particularly social media, to enhance institutional visibility, strengthen public trust, and attract prospective students in an increasingly competitive educational environment.

Social media has emerged as one of the primary tools in modern marketing strategies. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube serve not only as communication channels but also as powerful promotional media capable of reaching a wide audience quickly and cost-effectively [4], [5]. In the context of education, social media enables institutions to disseminate information about academic programs, facilities, achievements, and school culture in a more interactive and engaging manner. Furthermore, it facilitates two-way communication between institutions and prospective students or parents, thereby enhancing engagement and fostering closer relationships [6], [7].

Madrasahs, as Islamic educational institutions, face increasing challenges in competing within today's digital ecosystem, where prospective students and parents actively seek educational information through social media platforms. Recent trends on platforms such as

Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook indicate that educational institutions with engaging digital content, frequent interactions, and strong online branding receive substantially higher public attention than those relying on conventional communication. In contrast, many madrasahs still experience limited digital visibility, low audience engagement, irregular content updates, and minimal use of interactive features, making them less competitive in attracting prospective students [8]. These issues have become increasingly evident as parents and students increasingly rely on online reviews, social media content, and digital reputation when selecting educational institutions. Consequently, madrasahs need to transform not only their educational services but also their marketing strategies by adopting more strategic, data-driven, and interactive social media practices to strengthen institutional image and enhance their attractiveness in an increasingly competitive educational landscape.

Empirical observations indicate that the utilization of social media by madrasahs remains suboptimal. Many institutional accounts are used merely as one-way information channels without clear content strategies or efforts to foster audience interaction. The content presented is often monotonous, visually unappealing, and not aligned with the preferences of the digital generation [9], [10]. In addition, the frequency and consistency of content posting are still relatively low, resulting in limited visibility in the digital space. This condition suggests that social media has not yet been fully leveraged as a strategic and measurable marketing tool [11], [12].

The effectiveness of social media-based marketing strategies is not solely determined by the presence of social media accounts but also by several key factors, including content quality, usage intensity, and engagement levels. Previous studies have demonstrated that high-quality and relevant social media content significantly enhances institutional visibility, audience trust, and students' enrollment intentions. Likewise, consistent social media activity has been found to strengthen institutional awareness and improve communication effectiveness with prospective students. Research has also shown that audience engagement, reflected through likes, comments, shares, and interactive communication, plays a crucial role in building institutional reputation and influencing students' educational choices. However, most previous studies have examined these factors independently or focused primarily on higher education institutions, with limited attention to their integrated effects in the context of madrasahs. Therefore, this study develops a comprehensive model that simultaneously examines the roles of content quality, usage intensity, and engagement, while incorporating institutional image as a mediating variable in explaining prospective students' interest. High-quality content that is informative, relevant, and visually appealing can attract audience attention and interest, while consistent usage reflects an institution's commitment to maintaining digital communication. Moreover, high engagement can foster trust and emotional

connections with prospective students. These three elements are therefore considered critical determinants of successful educational marketing in the digital era [13]-[16].

In addition to these factors, institutional image plays a crucial role in influencing prospective students' interest. A positive image can enhance public trust and strengthen an institution's competitive position. Social media plays a strategic role in shaping this image, as information disseminated through digital platforms can quickly influence public perception. Thus, social media functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a medium for building an institutional image that impacts students' decision-making processes.

Samarinda City, as one of the rapidly developing urban areas in Indonesia, exhibits a highly competitive educational landscape. Various educational institutions compete to attract prospective students through innovative marketing strategies. In this context, madrasahs are required to adapt to technological advancements and utilize social media effectively to remain relevant and competitive [17]. However, there is still a lack of studies that specifically examine the effectiveness of social media-based educational marketing strategies in madrasahs, particularly in Samarinda.

Although previous studies have explored the role of social media in educational marketing, most of them remain partial and have not integrated multiple strategic variables into a comprehensive model. Prior research generally focuses on the direct influence of social media on student interest or decision-making without simultaneously considering factors such as content quality, usage intensity, and engagement. Moreover, the role of institutional image as a mediating variable in the relationship between social media and student interest has not been extensively examined, especially in the context of madrasahs.

These research gaps highlight the need for a more holistic approach to examining the effectiveness of social media-based educational marketing [18]. This study addresses this gap by developing a comprehensive model that integrates content quality, usage intensity, and engagement as independent variables, while positioning institutional image as a mediating variable in influencing prospective students' interest [19], [20]. This approach offers a more comprehensive perspective on how digital marketing strategies can be optimized within the context of Islamic education.

This study not only contributes theoretically to the development of educational marketing literature but also offers novelty in the form of a contextual and applicable empirical model. The proposed model is expected to serve as a foundation for madrasah administrators in designing more effective, structured, and sustainable social media-based marketing strategies. Furthermore, the findings are expected to provide practical recommendations for enhancing institutional image and attracting prospective students in the increasingly competitive digital education landscape.

Literature Review

A. Educational Marketing

Educational marketing refers to a series of strategic efforts carried out by educational institutions to attract, retain, and build relationships with students and the broader community [21], [22]. This concept is derived from service marketing theory, which emphasizes value creation, customer satisfaction, and trust. In the educational context, “customers” are not limited to students but also include parents and society at large as key decision-makers [23], [24].

In modern marketing approaches, educational institutions are required to identify the needs and preferences of prospective students and develop strategies that effectively address these demands. This becomes increasingly important in a highly competitive educational environment where institutions strive to establish competitive advantages [25]. In the context of madrasahs, educational marketing is not solely oriented toward academic excellence but also incorporates religious values and character development. Therefore, marketing strategies must integrate both rational aspects (educational quality) and emotional-spiritual dimensions [26], [27].

B. Digital Marketing and Social Media in Education

The advancement of information technology has driven a transformation in marketing strategies, with digital marketing emerging as a dominant approach in reaching target audiences [28]. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube have become effective tools for delivering information quickly, widely, and interactively. In the educational sector, social media serves not only as a promotional tool but also as a medium for two-way communication between institutions and prospective students or parents [29], [30]. However, the utilization of social media in educational institutions, particularly madrasahs, still faces several challenges. Many institutions have not yet managed their social media strategically and continue to use it primarily for one-way communication without focusing on content quality and audience engagement [29], [31]. This condition indicates that the potential of social media as an educational marketing tool has not been fully optimized [32], [33], [34].

C. Content Quality

Content quality is one of the key determinants of successful social media-based marketing. High-quality content should be clear, relevant, and visually appealing to capture audience attention effectively. According to marketing communication theory, well-delivered messages influence both cognitive and affective processes, which ultimately shape interest and behavioral intentions [35]-[37]. In the educational context, content may include information about academic programs, student achievements, school activities, and alumni testimonials. Creatively designed content that aligns with audience needs can significantly contribute to

building a positive perception of the institution. Therefore, content quality becomes a critical element in social media-based educational marketing strategies [38], [39].

D. Social Media Usage Intensity

Usage intensity refers to the frequency and consistency with which institutions publish content on social media platforms. Higher intensity increases the likelihood of enhancing visibility and strengthening institutional presence in the digital space. Exposure theory suggests that repeated exposure to information can improve recognition and influence individuals' perceptions [40]. Consistency in social media use also reflects the professionalism of institutions in managing digital communication. Educational institutions that actively and consistently share content are more likely to be recognized and remembered by the public. Therefore, usage intensity plays a crucial role in improving the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies [41].

E. Engagement

Engagement refers to the level of interaction between audiences and the content shared on social media, including likes, comments, and shares. It serves as a key indicator of the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. High engagement reflects successful two-way communication between educational institutions and their audiences [42]. Beyond increasing content visibility, engagement also contributes to building trust and emotional connections with audiences. In the educational context, higher engagement can be an early indicator of prospective students' interest in an institution. Therefore, enhancing engagement is a primary objective in social media-based marketing strategies [43].

F. Institutional Image

Institutional image refers to the perception formed in the minds of the public based on information and experiences related to an educational institution. This image encompasses aspects such as academic reputation, service quality, and institutional values [44]. A positive image enhances public trust and strengthens the institution's competitive position. Social media plays a strategic role in shaping institutional image due to its ability to disseminate information rapidly and broadly [45]. A madrasah image that reflects modernity, strong religious values, and high-quality education will increase its attractiveness [46]. Conversely, a weak or negative image can hinder the institution's ability to attract prospective students.

G. Prospective Student Interest

Prospective student interest refers to an individual's tendency to be attracted to and develop a preference for a particular educational institution before making a final decision. In consumer behavior theory, interest represents a crucial stage preceding decision-making. This interest can be reflected in actions such as seeking further information, visiting the institution, or registering for admission. It is influenced by various factors, including information exposure,

interaction experiences, and perceptions of the institution. Therefore, enhancing prospective student interest is a central objective in educational marketing strategies, particularly in the digital era.

H. Conceptual Research Framework

Based on the theoretical review and previous empirical studies, this study proposes a conceptual research framework to explain the relationships among the research variables. The framework assumes that content quality, usage intensity, and engagement directly influence institutional image and prospective students' interest. Furthermore, institutional image is hypothesized to mediate the relationship between social media-based educational marketing strategies and prospective students' interest. The proposed conceptual framework is presented in Fig. 1.

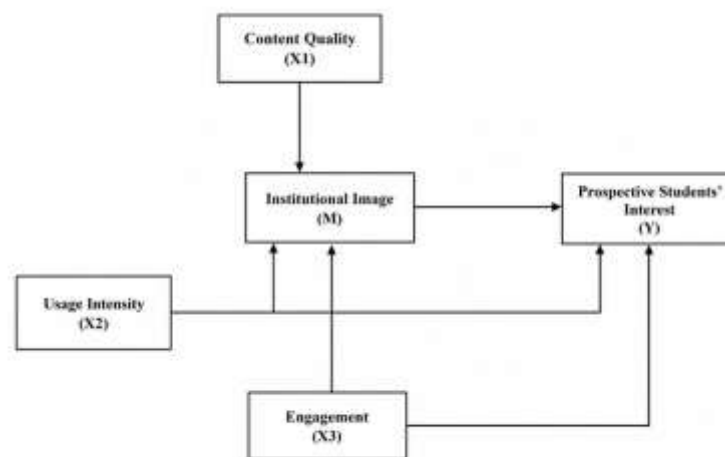


Fig. 1. Conceptual Research Framework

Material and Methods

A. Research Type and Design

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design aimed at examining the causal relationships among variables in the model of social media-based educational marketing effectiveness [47], [48]. The quantitative approach is selected because the study focuses on testing hypotheses derived from theoretical frameworks and utilizes numerical data analyzed through statistical methods [49].

The explanatory design is used to investigate the influence of independent variables, namely content quality, social media usage intensity, and engagement, on the dependent variable, which is prospective students' interest, both directly and indirectly through the mediating variable of institutional image [49]. Therefore, this study is not merely descriptive but seeks to empirically explain causal relationships among variables.

B. Research Location and Time

This research was conducted in Samarinda City, East Kalimantan, Indonesia, which represents a developing urban area with a relatively high level of competition among educational institutions. The selection of this location is based on the increasing use of social media as a marketing tool in education, as well as the dynamic competition among institutions, including madrasahs. The research was carried out over approximately four months, covering the stages of instrument development, data collection, data processing, analysis, and report preparation.

C. Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of prospective madrasah students in Samarinda City, including final-year elementary school students (or equivalent) and parents involved in educational decision-making. The study adopts a purely quantitative explanatory research design. Therefore, data were collected exclusively through structured questionnaires administered to 150 respondents selected using purposive sampling. No qualitative data collection or qualitative sampling was conducted in this study. The population of this study consists of prospective madrasah students in Samarinda City and their parents who were involved in the admission process for the 2025/2026 academic year. However, the respondents in this study were parents of prospective students, as they are the primary decision-makers in selecting educational institutions for their children.

The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, whereby respondents were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

1. being a parent or legal guardian of a prospective madrasah student,
2. having accessed or viewed the official social media accounts (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, or TikTok) of at least one madrasah in Samarinda within the last six months,
3. being actively involved in the school selection process, and
4. voluntarily agreeing to participate in the study.

The research instrument consisted of 10 measurement indicators representing five latent constructs: Content Quality (CQ1–CQ2), Usage Intensity (INT1–INT2), Engagement (ENG1–ENG2), Institutional Image (IMG1–IMG2), and Prospective Students' Interest (MIN1–MIN2). These indicators were adapted from previous validated studies on social media marketing, institutional image, and educational marketing and were modified to fit the context of madrasah education.

The sample size was determined based on the recommendation for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which suggests using a minimum sample size of 5–10 observations per indicator [49]. Given that this study employed 10 indicators, the minimum required sample ranged from 50 to 100 respondents. To improve the robustness and statistical

power of the analysis, a total of 150 respondents were included, exceeding the recommended minimum sample size.

D. Types and Sources of Data

This study relied primarily on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to the respondents. The questionnaire was developed based on indicators adopted from previous validated studies. Scientific journals, books, and other academic publications were used solely to develop the theoretical framework and research instrument and were not treated as research data for statistical analysis. Data collection is conducted online using Google Forms, which allows for efficient distribution and facilitates respondents in providing their answers. This method also enhances accessibility and increases the response rate in the digital context.

E. Data Collection Technique

The primary data collection method in this study is a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The questionnaire was developed based on measurement indicators adapted from previous validated studies and modified to suit the context of social media-based educational marketing in madrasahs. Before data collection, the instrument was reviewed by two experts in educational management and marketing to assess its content validity and clarity. Furthermore, construct validity and reliability were evaluated through the SEM-PLS measurement model using loading factors, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's Alpha. The results indicated that all indicators met the recommended validity and reliability criteria, confirming that the instrument was appropriate for data collection. To provide an empirical illustration of the collected data, a sample of respondents' data is presented in this study, while the complete dataset can be accessed via the following link: <https://s.id/data-penelitian-madrasah>

Table 1. Sample of Respondent Data.

No	CQ1	CQ2	INT1	INT2	ENG1	ENG2	IMG1	IMG2	MIN1	MIN2
1	A	SA	A	N	A	A	A	SA	A	A
2	N	A	N	D	N	A	N	A	N	A
3	SA	SA	A	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA
4	A	A	N	N	A	N	A	A	A	N
5	D	N	D	D	N	D	N	N	D	D

Remark: SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), N (Neutral), D (Disagree), SD (Strongly Disagree)

Table 1 presents a sample of respondent data obtained through the questionnaire distributed in this study. Each column represents indicators from the research variables, including content quality (CQ), social media usage intensity (INT), engagement (ENG), institutional image (IMG), and prospective student interest (MIN).

The responses are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The table illustrates the variation in respondents’ perceptions toward the use of social media in educational marketing. The collected data were subsequently coded into numerical values for further statistical analysis using the SEM-PLS approach. As this study adopted a purely quantitative explanatory design, all analyses were based exclusively on quantitative questionnaire data. No qualitative data collection, such as interviews, focus group discussions, or observations, was undertaken.

Results and Discussions

This study involved 150 respondents consisting of prospective madrasah students and parents in Samarinda City. Respondents were selected based on specific criteria, namely individuals who had accessed or viewed madrasah social media. In general, the respondents were dominated by active social media users, particularly on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, indicating the relevance of social media in educational marketing strategies.

The distribution of responses shows that the majority of respondents selected “agree” and “strongly agree” for statements related to content quality, usage intensity, and engagement. This finding indicates that madrasah social media has been utilized relatively well, although there is still room for further optimization.

A. Descriptive Analysis of Variables

Descriptive analysis was conducted to examine the general perception of respondents regarding the research variables, including content quality, usage intensity, engagement, institutional image, and prospective student interest. This analysis provides an initial understanding of response tendencies before proceeding to structural model testing.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Variables.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Category
Content Quality	4.12	0.62	High
Usage Intensity	3.98	0.70	High
Engagement	4.15	0.58	High
Institutional Image	4.20	0.55	High
Interest	4.25	0.53	High

Table 2 presents the results of the descriptive analysis for all research variables, including content quality, usage intensity, engagement, institutional image, and prospective student interest. The mean values of all variables range from 3.98 to 4.25, indicating that respondents’ perceptions generally fall within the “high” category. This suggests that social media-based marketing strategies implemented by madrasahs have created a positive impression among respondents.

The variable of prospective student interest has the highest mean value of 4.25 with a standard deviation of 0.53, indicating a strong and relatively homogeneous level of interest

among respondents toward madrasahs as educational choices. In contrast, usage intensity has the lowest mean value of 3.98 with a standard deviation of 0.70, reflecting greater variation in respondents' perceptions regarding the consistency and frequency of social media usage. Therefore, although all variables are categorized as high, the aspect of usage intensity still requires improvement to achieve optimal effectiveness.

B. Outer Model Evaluation

1. Convergent Validity Test

The convergent validity test was conducted to assess the extent to which the indicators represent the latent constructs being measured. This test uses loading factor values, with a minimum threshold of 0.70.

Table 3. Loading Factor

Variable	Indicator	Loading
Content Quality	CQ1	0.82
	CQ2	0.85
Usage Intensity	INT1	0.79
	INT2	0.83
Engagement	ENG1	0.86
	ENG2	0.88
Institutional Image	IMG1	0.84
	IMG2	0.87
Interest	MIN1	0.89
	MIN2	0.91

Table 3 presents the results of the convergent validity test based on the loading factor values of each indicator on its respective latent construct. All indicators have loading values above 0.70, indicating that they meet the criteria for convergent validity. This suggests that the indicators used in this study adequately represent the constructs being measured.

The highest loading value is found in the interest variable (MIN2) with a value of 0.91, indicating that this indicator has the strongest contribution in explaining prospective student interest. Meanwhile, the lowest loading value is observed in INT1 (0.79), which still exceeds the minimum threshold. Therefore, all indicators are considered valid and do not require elimination from the measurement model.

2. Reliability and Construct Validity Test

Reliability and construct validity tests were conducted to ensure that the measurement instrument has internal consistency and accurately explains the latent variables. This test uses Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Table 4 presents the results of reliability and construct validity testing. All variables have Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70, indicating good internal consistency of the measurement instrument.

Table 4. Composite Reliability and AVE

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Content Quality	0.78	0.87	0.69
Usage Intensity	0.74	0.85	0.66
Engagement	0.81	0.89	0.72
Institutional Image	0.80	0.88	0.71
Interest	0.85	0.91	0.75

In addition, all AVE values exceed 0.50, meaning that more than 50% of the variance in the indicators is explained by the latent constructs. The interest variable has the highest AVE value (0.75), indicating excellent convergent validity. Thus, all constructs in this study are considered reliable and valid.

3. Discriminant Validity Test

The discriminant validity test was conducted to ensure that each construct is distinct from other constructs in the model. This test uses the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Table 5. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Variable	CQ	INT	ENG	IMG	MIN
CQ	0.83				
INT	0.62	0.81			
ENG	0.65	0.60	0.85		
IMG	0.70	0.66	0.72	0.84	
MIN	0.68	0.64	0.69	0.75	0.87

Table 5 shows that the square root of AVE (diagonal values) is higher than the correlations between constructs, indicating that each construct is distinct from the others. This confirms that the model satisfies the discriminant validity requirement. The highest correlation is observed between institutional image and interest (0.75), indicating a strong relationship between the two variables. However, this value remains lower than the square root of AVE for each construct, meaning that discriminant validity is not violated.

4. Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test was conducted to ensure that there is no high correlation among independent variables that could affect the estimation of the model.

Table 6. VIF Values

Variable	VIF
Content Quality	2.10
Usage Intensity	1.95
Engagement	2.25

Table 6 presents the results of the multicollinearity test using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). All variables have VIF values below 5, ranging from 1.95 to 2.25, indicating that there is no multicollinearity issue in the model.

The highest VIF value is found in the engagement variable (2.25), but it remains within acceptable limits. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model is free from multicollinearity and suitable for further structural model analysis.

C. Inner Model Evaluation

1. Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)

Effect size (f^2) is used to assess the magnitude of the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable.

Table 7. R-Square

Variable	R ²	Category
Institutional Image	0.68	Strong
Interest	0.72	Strong

Table 7 presents the R-square values for the endogenous variables, namely institutional image and prospective student interest. The R-square value for institutional image is 0.68, indicating that 68% of the variance in institutional image can be explained by content quality, usage intensity, and engagement, while the remaining 32% is influenced by other factors outside the model. Similarly, the R-square value for interest is 0.72, which indicates that the model has strong explanatory power in explaining prospective students' interest. This suggests that the variables included in the model contribute significantly to influencing interest, and thus, the model can be categorized as having high explanatory capability.

2. Effect Size (f^2)

The predictive relevance (Q^2) test is conducted to evaluate the model's ability to predict observed data.

Table 8. Effect Size (f^2)

Relationship	f^2	Category
CQ → IMG	0.18	Moderate
INT → IMG	0.15	Moderate
ENG → IMG	0.22	Large
IMG → MIN	0.30	Large

Table 8 shows the effect size values of each relationship in the model. Engagement has the largest effect on institutional image with an f^2 value of 0.22, categorized as large. This indicates that interaction between the madrasah and its audience plays a dominant role in shaping the institutional image.

Furthermore, institutional image has the strongest effect on prospective student interest with an f^2 value of 0.30, also categorized as large. This finding confirms that institutional image is a key determinant in increasing students' interest. Meanwhile,

content quality and usage intensity also contribute significantly, although their effects fall within the moderate category.

3. Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

The predictive relevance (Q^2) test is conducted to evaluate the model's ability to predict observed data.

Table 9. Q-Square

Variable	Q^2
Institutional Image	0.49
Interest	0.53

Table 9 presents the Q-square values used to assess the predictive capability of the model. The Q^2 value for institutional image is 0.49, and for interest is 0.53, both of which are greater than zero. This indicates that the model has good predictive relevance.

The relatively high Q^2 values suggest that the model not only explains the relationships among variables but also has a strong ability to predict the observed phenomena. Therefore, the research model can be considered to have strong predictive capability.

D. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted to determine the significance of the relationships among variables in the research model.

Table10. Path coefficient

Relationship	Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Result
CQ → IMG	0.32	4.85	0.000	Accepted
INT → IMG	0.28	3.92	0.000	Accepted
ENG → IMG	0.35	5.10	0.000	Accepted
CQ → MIN	0.21	2.98	0.003	Accepted
INT → MIN	0.18	2.45	0.014	Accepted
ENG → MIN	0.22	3.10	0.002	Accepted
IMG → MIN	0.41	6.25	0.000	Accepted

Table 10 presents the results of hypothesis testing based on path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. All relationships among variables show t-statistics greater than 1.96 and p-values less than 0.05, indicating that all hypotheses in this study are supported. Institutional image has the strongest effect on prospective student interest, with a coefficient of 0.41, indicating that improvements in institutional image significantly enhance students' interest. Furthermore, engagement has the greatest influence on institutional image ($\beta = 0.35$), highlighting the importance of active interaction on social media in shaping public perception.

E. Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis was conducted to examine the role of institutional image in mediating the relationship between social media marketing strategies and prospective student interest.

Table 11. Indirect Effect.

Relationship	Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Description
CQ → IMG → MIN	0.13	3.20	0.001	Significant
INT → IMG → MIN	0.11	2.85	0.004	Significant
ENG → IMG → MIN	0.14	3.75	0.000	Significant

Table 11 presents the results of indirect effect testing to evaluate the mediating role of institutional image. All mediation paths show t-statistics greater than 1.96 and p-values less than 0.05, indicating significant indirect effects. These findings confirm that institutional image acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between content quality, usage intensity, and engagement toward prospective student interest. This implies that social media marketing strategies influence student interest not only directly but also indirectly through the formation of a positive institutional image.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of social media-based educational marketing strategies in influencing prospective students' interest through both direct and indirect mechanisms. The results confirm that content quality, usage intensity, and engagement play significant roles in shaping institutional image and student interest, aligning with contemporary marketing and consumer behavior theories.

The positive and significant effect of content quality on institutional image ($\beta = 0.32$) indicates that well-designed, informative, and visually appealing content contributes to building favorable perceptions of madrasahs. This finding is consistent with marketing communication theory, which emphasizes that message clarity and relevance influence audience cognition and perception. In the context of educational marketing, high-quality content serves not only as an information medium but also as a representation of institutional professionalism and credibility. This supports previous studies suggesting that digital content quality is a key determinant of brand image in online environments.

The influence of usage intensity on institutional image ($\beta = 0.28$) highlights the importance of consistency and frequency in social media communication. Repeated exposure to information enhances familiarity and recognition, which are essential elements in shaping public perception. This finding aligns with exposure theory, which posits that individuals tend to develop more positive attitudes toward stimuli they encounter frequently. In the educational context, consistent social media activity reflects institutional commitment and strengthens visibility in an increasingly competitive digital landscape.

Among all predictors, engagement demonstrates the strongest effect on institutional image ($\beta = 0.35$; $f^2 = 0.22$), emphasizing the critical role of interactive communication. Unlike traditional one-way promotion, social media enables two-way interactions that foster

emotional connections and trust. This finding supports relationship marketing theory, which argues that long-term relationships and customer engagement are essential for building strong brand equity. In this study, engagement emerges as a dominant factor, suggesting that madrasahs should prioritize interactive strategies such as responding to comments, conducting live sessions, and encouraging user participation.

The direct effects of content quality, usage intensity, and engagement on prospective student interest further reinforce the importance of digital marketing strategies in influencing behavioral intentions. The results indicate that social media not only shapes perceptions but also directly affects students' decision-making processes. This aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior, where attitudes and perceived information significantly influence intention formation. In this case, positive exposure to social media content increases the likelihood of students considering madrasahs as their educational choice.

Institutional image is found to have the strongest influence on prospective student interest ($\beta = 0.41$; $f^2 = 0.30$), confirming its role as a central determinant in educational decision-making. A positive image that reflects academic quality, religious values, and modernity enhances institutional attractiveness. This finding is in line with brand image theory, which states that a strong and positive image significantly affects consumer preferences and choices. In the context of madrasahs, building a modern yet value-based image is crucial in competing with other educational institutions.

The mediation analysis reveals that institutional image partially mediates the relationship between social media marketing strategies and prospective student interest. This indicates that the effectiveness of social media marketing is not solely dependent on direct influence but also on its ability to shape perceptions. The significant indirect effects ($\beta = 0.11$ – 0.14) demonstrate that institutional image acts as a bridge connecting marketing activities with behavioral outcomes. This finding enriches existing literature by providing a more comprehensive model that integrates both direct and indirect pathways.

The results of this study highlight that the success of social media-based educational marketing lies in the integration of content quality, consistent communication, and active engagement, all of which contribute to building a strong institutional image. In a competitive educational environment such as Samarinda, madrasahs must move beyond conventional promotional approaches and adopt strategic, data-driven digital marketing practices.

Conclusion

This study examined the effectiveness of social media-based educational marketing strategies in increasing prospective students' interest in madrasahs in Samarinda City by investigating the roles of content quality, usage intensity, engagement, and institutional image. The findings indicate that content quality, usage intensity, and engagement significantly

influence institutional image, while all three variables also have direct positive effects on prospective students' interest. Among these factors, engagement has the strongest effect on institutional image, whereas institutional image is the most influential determinant of prospective students' interest. Furthermore, institutional image serves as a significant partial mediator, reinforcing the relationship between social media marketing strategies and student interest. The research model demonstrates strong explanatory and predictive capabilities, indicating that the proposed framework is effective in explaining students' interest in the context of madrasah educational marketing.

The findings highlight the importance of integrating high-quality content, consistent social media activities, and active audience engagement to strengthen institutional image and enhance the attractiveness of madrasahs. This study contributes to the educational marketing literature by providing an empirical model that explains how social media strategies influence prospective students' interest through institutional image. Practically, the results suggest that madrasahs should adopt integrated and interactive digital marketing strategies to improve their competitiveness and respond effectively to the changing information-seeking behavior of prospective students and parents in the digital era.

Limitation and Suggestions

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research focuses on social media-based educational marketing variables, namely content quality, usage intensity, and engagement, with institutional image as a mediating variable. Other potentially influential factors, such as service quality, school facilities, tuition costs, and word-of-mouth communication, were not included in the model. Therefore, the findings may not fully capture all determinants influencing prospective students' interest in madrasahs.

Second, the data were collected using a self-reported questionnaire, which may be subject to response bias. Respondents' perceptions may not always reflect actual behavior or decision-making processes. In addition, the study was conducted within a specific geographical context, namely Samarinda City, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different socio-cultural and educational characteristics.

Third, this study employs a cross-sectional design, which captures data at a single point in time. As a result, it does not fully explain dynamic changes in students' perceptions and interests over time, particularly in the rapidly evolving digital environment.

Based on these limitations, several recommendations for future research are proposed. Future studies are encouraged to incorporate additional variables, such as service quality, institutional reputation, and parental influence, to develop a more comprehensive

model of educational marketing effectiveness. Researchers may also consider using mixed-method approaches by combining quantitative data with qualitative methods, such as interviews or observations, to gain deeper insights into students' decision-making processes.

Future research should explore longitudinal designs to examine changes in perceptions and interest over time. Expanding the research scope to include different regions or educational contexts will also enhance the generalizability of the findings. Finally, practical implementation studies are recommended to evaluate the real impact of social media marketing strategies on student enrollment and institutional competitiveness.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] S. Ndagire, M. Musa, and R. Lubaale, "A Systematic Review on the Utilization of Digital Marketing Communication Tools in Higher Education Institutions," vol. 19, pp. 887–893, Jan. 2024, doi: 10.5281/zenodo.10049652#303.
- [2] A. Kisiołek, O. Karyy, P. Kobis, and A. Pawliczek, "Digitalisation of marketing activities in higher education institutions," *Procedia Comput. Sci.*, vol. 270, pp. 1996–2005, 2025, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2025.09.320>.
- [3] A. M. Al-Adamat *et al.*, "The Impact of Digital Marketing for Education Services on the Mental Image for Students in Private Universities in Jordan," in *The Effect of Information Technology on Business and Marketing Intelligence Systems*, M. Alshurideh, B. H. Al Kurdi, R. Masa'deh, H. M. Alzoubi, and S. Salloum, Eds., Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023, pp. 223–240. doi: 10.1007/978-3-031-12382-5_12.
- [4] E. Constantinides and M. C. Zinck Stagno, "Potential of the social media as instruments of higher education marketing: a segmentation study," *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 7–24, Jun. 2011, doi: 10.1080/08841241.2011.573593.
- [5] A. M. Kaplan and M. Haenlein, "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media," *Bus. Horiz.*, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 59–68, 2010, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>.
- [6] H. Xie, Z. Tan, and X. Lv, "Application of Artificial Intelligence in Financial Risk Management in a Company," in *ACM International Conference Proceeding Series*, Association for Computing Machinery, Dec. 2024, pp. 349–354. doi: 10.1145/1122445.1122456.
- [7] S. Mallik and A. Gangopadhyay, "Proactive and Reactive Engagement of Artificial Intelligence Methods for Education: A Review," Jan. 2023, [Online]. Available: <http://arxiv.org/abs/2301.10231>
- [8] I. Machali, "Islam Memandang Hak Asasi Pendidikan," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 1–20, Feb. 2016, doi: 10.15575/jpi.v27i1.492.
- [9] S. Aimah, M. Nasih, N. Wafiroh, and F. M. Fakhruddin, "Engaging Generation Z: Marketing Innovations in Islamic Boarding Schools for Sustainability," *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 874–888, Sep. 2024, doi: 10.33650/al-tanzim.v8i3.8691.
- [10] S. Sudadi, H. Hifni, M. Taufiqqurahman, and S. Suharyatun, "Madrasah Public Relations Strategy in Building a Positive Image Based on Islamic Values," *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 318–330, Feb. 2026, doi: 10.33650/al-tanzim.v10i1.13537.
- [11] G. Ghuftron, M. Khusnurridlo, N. Najiburrahman, H. Baharun, and M. N. H. Muchlis, "Islamic Branding: Insights from Strengthening Madrasah Competitiveness in Building Public Trust," *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 179–190, Jan. 2023, doi: 10.33650/al-tanzim.v7i1.3943.
- [12] Z. Arifin, D. Artanto, and A. Rahman, "Digital Marketing: Marketing Strategy for Madrasah Education Services During The Covid-19 Pandemic," *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 1–10, Jan. 2023, doi: 10.33650/al-tanzim.v7i1.3443.

- [13] J. P. van der Harst and S. Angelopoulos, "Less is more: Engagement with the content of social media influencers," *J. Bus. Res.*, vol. 181, p. 114746, 2024, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.114746>.
- [14] S. Bazi, R. Filieri, and M. Gorton, "Social media content aesthetic quality and customer engagement: The mediating role of entertainment and impacts on brand love and loyalty," *J. Bus. Res.*, vol. 160, p. 113778, 2023, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113778>.
- [15] D. K S and A. Massand, "A study on reflective factors of social media marketing activities and its influence on purchase intention of Gen Z," *Acta Psychol. (Amst)*, vol. 259, p. 105459, 2025, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105459>.
- [16] J. Cai, S. Osman, S. A. Haron, and W. Teng, "Storytelling, humour, and promotions: How social media marketing influences university students' green purchase intention," *Sustainable Futures*, vol. 10, p. 101001, 2025, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sftr.2025.101001>.
- [17] B. Busriadi, M. Zaki, L. A. Chusmita, and A. Hidayat, "The Satisfaction Analysis of Professional Placement Partners on the Performance of University Students," *AL-TANZIM: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 1064–1078, Aug. 2022, doi: 10.33650/al-tanzim.v6i4.3862.
- [18] W. Dharmayanti and S. Munadi, "Faktor-Faktor yang Memengaruhi Minat Siswa SMP Masuk SMK di Kota Pontianak [Factors Affecting Junior High School Students' Interest In Studying At Vocational High School In Pontianak City]," *J. Pendidikan Vokasi*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 405-419.
- [19] S. Nurmala, "Faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi minat siswa untuk melanjutkan ke Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan," *Jurnal Kependidikan: Penelitian Inovasi Pembelajaran*, vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 162–172, Nov. 2012, doi: 10.21831/jk.v42i2.1950.
- [20] A. Majid, "Faktor-faktor yang berpengaruh terhadap minat siswa SMP masuk SMK," *Jurnal Pendidikan Vokasi*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 284–292, Nov. 2012, doi: 10.21831/jpv.v2i3.1037.
- [21] M. Umar, H. Nawawi, N. Latifah, and A. E. Sujianto, "Educational Services Marketing," *EDUTEC: Journal of Education and Technology*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 36–45, Sep. 2021.
- [22] L. Najiah, "Educational Marketing Management Strategy Through Social Media to Increase the Interest of New Students," in *Proceedings of International Conference on Education, Society and Humanity (ICESH)*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 507–514, 2024.
- [23] A. Nurman, E. Harapan, and N. Kesumawati, "Journal of Educational and Learning Studies Education service marketing management," vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 51–56, 2021, doi: 10.32698/01442.
- [24] A. Zohriah, A. Muin, S. Rohimat, S. Al Faqih, and U. Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, "The Dynamics of Educational Services Marketing in the Digital Era," 2025.
- [25] M. Marya, A. Anengsih, A. Zohriah, and A. Mu'in, "Human Resource Development Strategy and Educational Marketing Mix in Improving the Competitiveness of Educational Institutions," *SOSIOEDUKASI: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan dan Sosial*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 3295–3307, Dec. 2025, doi: 10.36526/sosioedukasi.v14i4.6511.
- [26] H. Harini, D. P. Wahyuningtyas, S. Sutrisno, M. I. Wanof, and A. M. A. Ausat, "Marketing Strategy for Early Childhood Education (ECE) Schools in the Digital Age," *Jurnal Obsesi : Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 2742–2758, May 2023, doi: 10.31004/obsesi.v7i3.4454.
- [27] A. Zohriah, A. F. Firdaus, A. Idris, M. Nuroniyah, and A. Muin, "The Evolution of Educational Service Marketing and Relational Marketing in Islamic Education Institutions," *Islamic Management: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 97–112, 2026, doi: 10.30868/im.v9i01.9269.
- [28] A. M. Shahzad, F. T. Mousa, and M. P. Sharfman, "The implications of slack heterogeneity for the slack-resources and corporate social performance relationship," *J. Bus. Res.*, vol. 69, no. 12, pp. 5964–5971, 2016, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.05.010>.
- [29] M. Rey-Moreno, J. A. Felfcio, C. Medina-Molina, and R. Rufin, "Facilitator and inhibitor factors: Adopting e-government in a dual model," *J. Bus. Res.*, vol. 88, pp. 542–549, 2018, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.11.015>.
- [30] L. Dessart, C. Veloutsou, and A. Morgan-Thomas, "Consumer engagement in online brand communities: a social media perspective," *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 28–42, Mar. 2015, doi: 10.1108/JPBM-06-2014-0635.
- [31] A. M. Kaplan and M. Haenlein, "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media," *Bus. Horiz.*, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 59–68, 2010, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>.
- [32] A. Kaplan and G. Mazurek, "Social Media," in *Handbook of Media Management and Economics*, A. Albarran, B. Mierzejewska, and J. Jung, Eds. New York, NY, USA: Routledge, 2018, pp. 273–286.

- [33] P. K. Kannan and H. "Alice" Li, "Digital marketing: A framework, review and research agenda," *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 22–45, 2017, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2016.11.006>.
- [34] Y. K. Dwivedi *et al.*, "Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions," *Int. J. Inf. Manage.*, vol. 59, p. 102168, 2021, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168>.
- [35] J. Dawes, "Cigarette brand loyalty and purchase patterns: An examination using US consumer panel data," *J. Bus. Res.*, vol. 67, no. 9, pp. 1933–1943, 2014, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.11.014>.
- [36] S. Yousaf and F. Xiucheng, "Humanizing stigmatized places: Inter-group contact and attitude change toward Pakistan and Iran in the 'Humans of New York' Facebook space," *J. Bus. Res.*, vol. 116, pp. 666–679, 2020, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.04.015>.
- [37] Y. K. Dwivedi *et al.*, "Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions," *Int. J. Inf. Manage.*, vol. 59, p. 102168, 2021, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168>.
- [38] Lisette de Vries, Sonja Gensler, and Peter S H Leeflang, "Popularity of Brand Posts on Brand Fan Pages: An Investigation of the Effects of Social Media Marketing," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 83–91, May 2012, doi: [10.1016/j.intmar.2012.01.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2012.01.003).
- [39] M. Rey-Moreno, J. A. Felício, C. Medina-Molina, and R. Ruffin, "Facilitator and inhibitor factors: Adopting e-government in a dual model," *J. Bus. Res.*, vol. 88, pp. 542–549, 2018, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.11.015>.
- [40] A. M. Shahzad, F. T. Mousa, and M. P. Sharfman, "The implications of slack heterogeneity for the slack-resources and corporate social performance relationship," *J. Bus. Res.*, vol. 69, no. 12, pp. 5964–5971, 2016, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.05.010>.
- [41] M. Rey-Moreno, J. A. Felício, C. Medina-Molina, and R. Ruffin, "Facilitator and inhibitor factors: Adopting e-government in a dual model," *J. Bus. Res.*, vol. 88, pp. 542–549, 2018, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.11.015>.
- [42] Y. M. Wong, "Effect of Laser Acupuncture on Heart Rate Variability of Nonpatients and Patients with Spinal Cord Injury," *J. Acupunct. Meridian Stud.*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 53–54, 2017, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jams.2016.11.004>.
- [43] S. Yousaf and F. Xiucheng, "Humanizing stigmatized places: Inter-group contact and attitude change toward Pakistan and Iran in the 'Humans of New York' Facebook space," *J. Bus. Res.*, vol. 116, pp. 666–679, 2020, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.04.015>.
- [44] A. M. Shahzad, F. T. Mousa, and M. P. Sharfman, "The implications of slack heterogeneity for the slack-resources and corporate social performance relationship," *J. Bus. Res.*, vol. 69, no. 12, pp. 5964–5971, 2016, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.05.010>.
- [45] X. Liang and J. Frösén, "Examining the link between marketing controls and firm performance: The mediating effect of market-focused learning capability," *J. Bus. Res.*, vol. 109, pp. 545–556, 2020, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.01.021>.
- [46] C. J. Edwards, J. S. Bendickson, B. L. Baker, and S. J. Solomon, "Entrepreneurship within the history of marketing," *J. Bus. Res.*, vol. 108, pp. 259–267, 2020, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.10.040>.
- [47] J. W. Creswell and J. D. Creswell, *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications, 2017.
- [48] M. Saunders, P. Lewis, and A. Thornhill, "Research Methods for Business Students (4th edn," 2011.
- [49] M. Sarstedt, C. M. Ringle, and J. F. Hair, "Partial least squares structural equation modeling," in *Handbook of market research*, Springer, 2021, pp. 587–632.

Authors



Basri is an Indonesian civil servant at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, actively supporting institutional development, educational policies, and community empowerment. He is currently pursuing a Doctoral degree in Educational Management at Universitas Mulawarman. His research interests include educational governance, human resource development, and institutional effectiveness. He integrates professional experience with academic research to contribute to improving educational quality and public service in Indonesia. (email: basripengawaskota@gmail.com).



Ilham is an Indonesian professional committed to public service, educational development, and institutional leadership. He is currently pursuing a Doctoral degree in Educational Management at Universitas Mulawarman. His academic interests focus on educational management, institutional effectiveness, and human resource development. By combining practical experience with academic knowledge, he seeks to enhance educational quality and strengthen management practices that support sustainable educational development in Indonesia. (email: ilham.muchtar10@gmail.com).



Prof. Dr. Widyatmike Gede Mulawarman, M.Hum    is a Professor at Universitas Mulawarman specializing in guidance and counseling and educational sciences. His research focuses on counseling psychology, student development, educational innovation, character education, and mental health. He has made significant contributions through teaching, research, and community engagement, advancing counseling practices and improving educational quality, particularly in higher education and teacher education institutions. (email: widyatmike@fkip.unmul.ac.id).



Prof. Dr. Nurlaili, M.P    is a Professor of Educational Management at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Mulawarman. Her research interests include teacher performance, educational leadership, organizational conflict, work stress, and human resource management in education. She actively contributes to research, teaching, and community service, promoting educational innovation and effective leadership to improve institutional performance and educational quality in Indonesia. (email: nurlaili@fkip.unmul.ac.id).