

Religious and Cultural Foundations of School-Parent Partnerships in an Outstanding Islamic Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

Partnerships between educational institutions and parents are crucial in building a supportive environment for the academic and non-academic successes of students. This study aims to describe the organization and development of school-parent collaborations by SD Muhammadiyah 4 Surabaya (Mudipat), one of the prominent Islamic elementary schools, to improve student achievement. The research employed a qualitative methodology and a case study framework to gather data through in-depth interviews, document analysis, and observations. Data analysis was performed using the following methods: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings present that strategic school-parent partnerships at Mudipat are based on well-articulated principles like internal solidarity, prioritization of systems over individuals, commitment and consistency, contribution, satisfaction, social responsibility, responsiveness to the needs of the school, and utilization of networks. The principles are operationalized through practices such as the Muhammadiyah Parents Association (IKWAM), which involves parents at the personal and institutional levels in the school's decision-making process, ensuring transparency in management, and providing the best services to students and parents. The study concludes that well-managed strategic school-parent partnerships significantly enhance support for students' academic and non-academic success.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Collaboration of educational institutions and parents is important for the improvement of the quality of education and student learning outcomes. A study carried out by Abbas et al. (2023) indicates that strong and positive school-parent relationships are conducive to the creation of a supportive learning environment, increased learning motivation, and optimal academic and non-academic development of students. Schools are no longer the only stakeholders responsible for children's education, but rather part of a broader educational ecosystem that includes the community and family. The establishment of sustained, quality-oriented education depends critically on the formation of school-parent partnerships.

Parents' participation in the educational process strengthens the relationship between schools and communities, leading to increased parental trust and satisfaction with educational institutions (Afif et al., 2022). Education is not limited to the classroom, but includes the family and community environments of students as schools and parents work together to develop shared goals and ideals. This synergy encourages the continuous development of children in the cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor domains. In the context of globalization, educational institutions and parents can mutually reinforce each other's roles in shaping the younger generation to be competent, flexible, and competitive through planned, ongoing collaboration (Arifin, 2025).

From the perspective of socio-cultural education, strategic alliances are essential between educational institutions and parents to foster good and productive learning environments. Iskandar (2021) states that family-school interaction is one of the important things that affect the creation of a supportive learning environment, besides internal school problems. Research indicates that positive, collaborative relationships between teachers and parents enhance children's motivation, discipline, and overall learning outcomes (Lynch, n.d.). These interactions imply a shared understanding that the education of children is a concern for all, not solely the purview of formal institutions.

Hence, it is critical to see school-parent relations as ongoing collaboration rather than infrequent communication, built through intentional and meaningful contacts (Hasmar, 2024). Such ongoing cooperation helps foster safe, friendly relations between schools and parents and, at the same time, promotes a culture of cooperation within educational communities. In this context, school-parent partnerships are not only technical solutions in educational administration but also socio-cultural practices that reflect shared values, norms, and views on the importance of children's education.

School-parent relationships have been the subject of a large body of academic work, but most studies still frame them in the framework of parental participation. Most of the literature examines parental involvement in school activities, communication between teachers and parents, or parents' involvement in character education. Massucco (2020) studied the importance of parental involvement and school-parent cooperation techniques as important factors of students' academic achievement. The study found that parents, teachers, and administrators face many structural and cultural barriers to effective engagement. Despite remaining implementation challenges, these findings highlight the importance of engaging parents, schools, and communities in parallel to improve children's educational achievement.

In the same vein, Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) highlighted the significance of parental participation in educational activities by providing the principles of effective school-parent collaboration. They employed Epstein's six characteristics of partnership: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and working with the community, as well as six forms of parental participation, beginning from the Protective Model to the Partnership Model. Though they provide valuable conceptual insights, these studies tend to describe parental involvement in functional activities rather than conceptualizing school-parent relationships as strategic partnerships with value-based and cultural characteristics.

In the context of promoting family well-being, Harini et al. (2024) examined the link between parental involvement and students' academic outcomes. Their findings indicate that home-based learning assistance, parental participation in school activities, and adjustment to digital learning settings significantly enhance students' academic achievements. Improved academic achievement leads to improved family well-being in social, economic, and psychological dimensions. However, in this study, school-parent partnerships are not explicitly conceptualized as strategic, long-term, collaborative ties.

Preliminary empirical findings at SD Muhammadiyah 4 Surabaya (Mudipat) show that Islamic and Muhammadiyah ideals are important in influencing the school's regulations, communication patterns, and partnership decisions. School policies and partnership mechanisms are grounded in the principle of *amanah* (trust), which conceptualizes education as a shared moral responsibility between schools and parents, rather than a service for sale, a position that aligns with recent research that emphasizes *amanah* as a fundamental value for transparent and accountable educational governance. This value orientation is evident in the school's internal regulations of the school, which prioritize collective decision-making, transparency, and institutional systems over individual interests, aligning with value-based management principles in Islamic educational institutions (Rahmatullah et al., 2025). The communication between school leaders and parents is dialogical and participatory, reflecting the organizational culture of collegial leadership and mutual consultation (*musyawarah*) in Muhammadiyah, which is highlighted in the current empirical discourse on collaborative management in Islamic education. Decisions on partnerships, such as parental participation in school planning, program evaluation, or the encouragement of both academic and extracurricular activities, are often grounded in religious accounts of *ta'āwun* (mutual help) and shared responsibility. This is consistent with the research that effective school-family collaboration in Islamic education is strengthened by the normative principles of *ta'āwun* and *shura* (Kamil & Abdullah, 2025). Empirical evidence shows that school-parent partnerships at Mudipat are not only technical arrangements but also value-based practices grounded in Islamic norms and the organizational culture of Muhammadiyah. These practices are vital to the process of rule-making, communication, and collaborative decision-making, in line with recent studies of parental engagement in Muhammadiyah primary schools as a catalyst of Islamic school culture (Fahrudin & Astutik, 2024).

This study defines 'cultural' as a set of shared beliefs, norms, and habitual practices that shape the formation, communication, and implementation of school-parent partnerships within the context of Islamic education (Alfianto, 2024). The current study examines a cultural dimension with three interrelated layers. First, it relates to the organizational culture of Muhammadiyah, which is characterized by collective leadership, *musyawarah* (deliberative decision-making), the priority of institutional systems over people, and the ethical ideals of

amanah (trust) and *ta'āwun* (mutual cooperation). Second, it reflects the spirit of a prestigious Islamic institution that values excellence, professionalism, responsibility, and continuous improvement in the management of its educational programs and partnerships. Third, it relates to the normative culture of the parent community (*wali murid*) in which parents have a social and moral obligation to participate actively as partners and co-educators rather than as passive consumers of services. Cultural layers interact to inform school policies, communication patterns, and partnership decisions, transforming school–parent relationships from mere technical or administrative exchanges to value-driven and strategic collaboration (Syifahaya 2025).

Lindfors et al. (2018) assert that trust and collaboration between educational institutions and families represent kinds of social capital that directly affect academic performance and student success. Social capital develops through transparent communication, regular engagement, and alignment of values between educational institutions and parents. Organized parental assistance, in conjunction with educational programs, aids pupils in time management, cultivating interests and abilities, and preparing for participation in diverse academic and extracurricular competitions. These findings underscore that school–parent relationships have substantial social and cultural characteristics that contribute to educational performance.

While there is a large body of literature on school–parent relationships, research that conceptualizes such relationships explicitly as strategic partnerships, involving deliberate management, goal orientation, and a foundation in shared values and culture, is still scarce. The distinction is very evident in studies that include religious and cultural perspectives to understand school–parent collaborations in Islamic educational contexts. Teaching children in Islamic education is not merely a transfer of knowledge but also a moral and spiritual trust (*amanah*) that is shared by families and educational institutions.

From the religious perspective, especially in Islam, the education of children is a community obligation on the basis of the concepts of trust, accountability, and mutual collaboration (*ta'āwun*). Parents cannot turn over educational responsibilities to the schools. Nor can schools function well without parental help. In this relationship, there are ideas of Islamic education that emphasize the balance between the role of the family and the role of formal educational institutions in shaping the character, morals, and skills of children. Therefore, the collaboration between schools and parents in Islamic education has moral and religious dimensions that extend beyond the technicalities of educational management.

Strategic partnerships are collaborative agreements developed and maintained to achieve common objectives through commitment, coordination, trust, and effective communication (Mohr & Spekman, 1994). Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2015) define strategic partnerships as long-term relationships among stakeholders to solve complex problems through collective planning, governance arrangements, and fair distribution of resources. According to Sumual et al. (2025), strategic partnerships in educational institutions aim to align organizational visions, missions, and core values to create lasting synergy in the pursuit of shared educational goals.

Although the importance of school–parent partnership in Islamic primary education has been emphasized by recent studies, they leave a particular gap that the present study addresses. Fahrudin and Astutik (2024) describe the role of parents in establishing an Islamic school culture in an elementary school of Muhammadiyah by increasing parental involvement in communication and collaboration. However, the focus is on cultural development rather than on the strategic management of partnerships through organizational principles and governance frameworks.

Likewise, Sumarsono et al. (2025) provide multi-case evidence from madrasah *ibtidaiyahs* to show that parental engagement improves educational quality through communication, transparency, and participation in planning and monitoring. However, the study does not explicitly conceptualize partnerships as strategic, value-driven collaborations shaped by Muhammadiyah's organizational culture and institutional frameworks, such as parent associations. Similarly, Sumarsono et al. (2025) provide multi-case data from madrasah *ibtidaiyah* indicating that parental involvement improves educational quality through communication, transparency, and involvement in planning and monitoring. However, the study does not explicitly conceptualize partnerships as strategic, value-driven collaborations shaped by the organizational culture of Muhammadiyah and institutional structures like parent associations. However, despite the growing body of scholarship on parental involvement and Islamic educational collaboration, little research has explicitly defined and empirically examined school–parent partnerships as strategically orchestrated collaborations grounded in the Islamic value system and Muhammadiyah organizational culture, and has linked these management principles to academic and non-academic student outcomes. This lacuna is addressed by the present case study at SD Muhammadiyah 4 Surabaya (Mudipat).

The current research has two principal aims. The present study intends to thoroughly explain the management practices of strategic partnerships between schools and parents from the perspective of religious beliefs and the organizational culture of Islamic education. Secondly, it attempts to assess the impact of these relationships on students' academic and non-academic outcomes. This study aims to explore the activities of partnership and their meaning, values, and ramifications in the field of Islamic education.

The aim of this research is twofold. This research aims to comprehensively explain the management of strategic partnerships between schools and parents in Islamic education, grounded in religious values and organizational culture. Secondly, the objective is to analyze the impact of such relationships on students' academic and non-academic success. The study explores the partnership activities and their meanings, values, and implications in the field of Islamic education.

2. METHODS

This study aims to explore the development of strategic partnerships between schools and parents in the context of Islamic education, especially in SD Muhammadiyah 4 Surabaya (*Mudipat*). The research aims to understand how such partnerships are initiated, implemented, and sustained in everyday educational practices, and how they contribute to students' academic and non-academic achievement. In this study, school–parent partnerships are not merely managerial arrangements but socially constructed practices infused with religious values and shaped by the organizational culture of Islamic education.

Mudipat's process of building strategic partnerships is gradual. It begins with awareness of the importance of collaboration between schools and parents, followed by the formulation of partnership programs in school policy documents, then implementation of these programs, and finally the process of evaluation and reflection. To capture this process in its entirety, the study looks into the lived experiences of the key educational actors and parents who have been directly

involved in the partnership. This strategy seeks to identify not only observable practices but also the meanings and values attributed by the participants to their collaborative relationships.

A qualitative research approach was adopted because the research was exploratory in nature and concerned with meaning, context, and lived experience. Qualitative inquiry enables an in-depth, holistic understanding of social phenomena from the perspective of those involved. According to Moleong (2018b), in line with the view of Lincoln and Guba, the researcher is the main instrument of data collection, and this allows the researcher to directly interact with the participants and the research setting. This approach is particularly well-suited to examining collaborations in Islamic educational institutions, where practices are deeply rooted in religious norms, moral values, and cultural traditions.

Two main considerations guided the choice of a qualitative approach. First, it allows the exploration of the subjective experiences, perspectives, and interpretations of key actors such as the school principal, vice principals, head of public relations, head of research and development (R&D), and members of the school committee representing parents. These actors have been instrumental in the creation and sustaining of strategic partnerships that support student achievement. Second, the approach enables exploration of how religious values and organizational culture influence partnership practices and how these values are negotiated and reshaped through ongoing interaction.

The study used a case study design because the phenomenon under study is ongoing, and the partnership practices under examination were still active at the time of data collection. The case study approach allows for intensive, contextualized study of a single setting to develop a deep understanding of complex social processes. As explained by Anderson et al. and Jupp (cited in Maimun, 2020), case studies are more focused on depth than statistical generalization and use multiple sources of data to illuminate a phenomenon within its real-life context. This study used SD Muhammadiyah 4 Surabaya as a single case with an information-rich case that offers an insight into the strategic school–parent partnership from the religious and cultural perspectives.

Direct involvement of the researcher in the field is of utmost importance in qualitative research. In this research, the researcher was involved in all stages of research, beginning with the formulation of initial guiding questions, narrowing the research focus, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting data, and drawing conclusions (Sugiyono, 2013). This active engagement allowed the researcher to be responsive and adaptive to the research context. The researcher was a responsive, holistic, and context-sensitive instrument that captured both explicit practices and implicit meanings embedded in school–parent partnerships (Moleong, 2018), in line with the framework of Guba and Lincoln.

Table 1. Research Informants and Data Collection

Informant Category	Number (n)	Role	Sampling Technique	Data Collection Period
School Principal	1	Policy & partnership leadership	Purposive	Feb–May 2024
Vice Principals	2	Academic & student affairs	Purposive	Feb–May 2024
Head of R&D	1	Partnership evaluation	Purposive	Feb–May 2024
Head of Public Relations	1	Parent communication	Purposive	Feb–May 2024
Parent Representatives (IKWAM)	4	Partnership implementation	Snowball	Mar–May 2024
Total	9			

The research was conducted at SD Muhammadiyah 4 Surabaya. The data was collected directly from primary sources by the researcher, who was continuously present in the field. Primary data was collected from the school principal, vice principals, head of R&D, head of public relations, and a member of the school committee or IKWAM (Muhammadiyah Parents Association). These informants were intentionally selected for their direct roles in planning, implementing, and evaluating partnership initiatives. As the data collection process continued, additional informants were appointed as the need arose to deepen understanding and increase data adequacy. The data consisted primarily of participants' stories, perceptions, and reflections on establishing and maintaining school–parent partnerships.

Data collection was carried out through the combination of in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Rich and nuanced accounts were achieved through in-depth interviews of participants' experiences and interpretations of partnership practices. The researcher observed interaction patterns, communication practices, and the socio-cultural context in which partnerships operated. Documentation was used for supplementation and triangulation in addition to interview and observational data. Documentation included school policy documents, partnership programs, meeting records, and activity reports.

Data analysis was conducted in parallel with data collection and throughout the research process. Analysis was carried out following the approach outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) in which interview transcripts, field notes, and documentary materials were systematically sorted and examined for significant patterns and themes. The study applied descriptive qualitative analysis using a single-case analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman. This process includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Sugiyono, 2022). Throughout these stages, the researcher identified common themes of partnership practices, values, and contributions to student achievement. The data analysis was conducted using a systematic qualitative method. First, verbatim transcripts of the interview recordings were compiled with observation notes and relevant documents. Second, open coding was performed to identify shared concepts about partnership practices, values, and outcomes. Third, codes were clustered into broader categories and themes, including internal solidarity, transparency, and use of the network. Finally, data triangulation between interviews, observations, and documents was used to verify themes. For instance, the theme of “systems over individuals” was mentioned often in interviews with leaders, in school rules, and in observed decision-making practices.

Given that qualitative research is interpretive and the researcher is the primary instrument, considerable attention was paid to ensuring the trustworthiness of the findings. Strategies were applied based on the criteria proposed by Guba and Lincoln (Sugiyono, 2022) to enhance credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The measures were taken to ensure the findings were truly representative of the participants' perspectives and based on systematically analyzed data, thereby enhancing the study's academic rigor of the study in the field of Islamic and value-based education research.

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and gave verbal informed consent prior to data collection. The identities of participants were anonymized to ensure confidentiality. The research was carried out with the permission of the institution SD Muhammadiyah 4 Surabaya, and the data was used only for academic purposes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

3.1.1. Overview of SD Muhammadiyah 4 Surabaya (Mudipat)

SD Muhammadiyah 4 Surabaya, or commonly called Mudipat, is one of the Islamic elementary schools in the city of Surabaya. The school was founded in 1963 and is located on Pucang Anom Timur Street No. 93, Surabaya. The school was established with a vision of providing Islamic education that combines academic excellence, character development, and openness to global progress. Mudipat is known as an Islamic, modern, comprehensive, multicultural, globalized, child-friendly, and parent-friendly elementary school that adopts a humanistic approach to education.

The educational practice of Mudipat combines the values of Al-Islam and Muhammadiyah with the national curriculum and local content and applies the Cambridge International Program (CIP). Since the mid-1990s, Mudipat has gained public recognition as a high-quality and highly sought-after school. The school leadership during this period introduced curricular innovations, including the early introduction of English and computer studies at the elementary level, which was uncommon at the time. These innovations were a great turning point in the transformation of Mudipat to a competitive and forward-looking educational institution.

In the 2024/2025 academic year, Mudipat continues to show strong institutional growth, as evidenced by high levels of public trust and student achievement. The school offers nine classes per grade level, four of which are International Class Program (ICP) classes. The number of students is 1,432, of whom 732 are boys, and 710 are girls. Mudipat is supported by highly competent and committed teaching and administrative staff from a human resource perspective. The school has a teaching staff of 112, most of whom hold undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and 40 administrative staff with diverse educational backgrounds. This profile is a reflection of Mudipat's readiness to manage the education institutionally in a professional and sustainable manner.

3.1.2. Management of Strategic School–Parent Partnerships at Mudipat

The findings suggest that the strategic alliances forged between the school and the parents at Mudipat were not haphazard creations but evolved from a shared recognition that the school cannot achieve educational success in isolation. The school sees parents as primary partners in the educational process, not simply as service recipients. Thus, the systematic design of school management includes parental involvement as an integral part in planning, implementation, and evaluation of educational programs.

The school and parents have formed these strategic alliances based on a common set of principles. The first principle is internal solidarity, which stresses the importance of internal school stakeholders' unity- school leaders, teachers, and staff- prior to their involvement in partnerships with external parties. This principle is grounded in the Muhammadiyah tradition of collective and collegial leadership, in which burdens and challenges are shared. "One school leader explained it this way:

“Before building cooperation with parents, we always ensure that the internal team is solid. If the school is not united internally, it will be difficult to gain parents’ trust and support” (School Principal, interview, March 2024)”

This internal cohesion allows the school to present a coherent vision and synchronized communication when interacting with parents, thereby reinforcing the foundation of school–parent partnerships.

The second principle is the priority of systems over individuals, that the management of schools is carried out based on clear systems, regulations, and allocation of roles, which are compatible with the competencies of individuals. The aim is to prevent subjectivity, such as individual preferences, in the distribution of decisions and tasks. One informant underlined that institutional systems are the main reference in partnership management, saying that:

“At this school, tasks and responsibilities are assigned based on the system, not on personal closeness or individual interests. When everything follows clear procedures, collaboration with parents becomes more professional and fair” (Vice Principal for Academic Affairs, interview, March 2024).

The school is systems-based rather than person-based, ensuring consistency, transparency, and continuity of the institution in its work with school-parent partnerships.

The third principle is commitment and consistency. This principle means working with dedication and perseverance until the task is fully completed. Teachers and staff are expected to have a strong work ethic that upholds the principle of sustained, accountable implementation of educational programs. As one of the informants said,

“Programs at this school are not designed only to look good on paper. Once a program is agreed upon, we are committed to carrying it out consistently until it achieves its objectives” (Head of Research and Development, interview, April 2024).

This ongoing commitment ensures program continuity and builds parents’ confidence that school initiatives are carried out responsibly rather than as short-term activities.

The fourth principle is contribution. All stakeholders, including teachers, staff, and parents, are invited to actively contribute to the development of the school. This orientation engenders a strong sense of ownership, commitment, and institutional loyalty. “We all have this common responsibility,” stressed a parent representative,

“We are not positioned as donors or guests, but as part of the school. Parents are encouraged to contribute according to their abilities, whether through ideas, time, or professional expertise” (Parent Representative, IKWAM, interview, April 2024).

This approach increases parents’ sense of belonging and solidifies the partnership as a collaborative venture to advance the school’s academic and non-academic programs.

The fifth principle is satisfaction, which makes stakeholder satisfaction a primary goal of partnership. The internal satisfaction of teachers and staff is deemed a prerequisite for the provision of high-quality services. The external satisfaction is sought through services that are responsive, transparent, and communicative for students and parents. One informant explained this orientation by saying,

“If teachers and staff feel appreciated and supported, they will serve students and parents better. At the same time, parents’ satisfaction is built through openness,

quick responses, and clear communication from the school” (Head of Public Relations, interview, April 2024).

This dual focus on internal and external satisfaction reinforces the quality of service and builds long-term trust between the school and parents.

The sixth principle is care and social responsibility. Mudipat is committed to supporting and sharing best practices with less-developed schools. This value is expressed through collaborative activities with students and parents, including educational visits and knowledge-sharing sessions. This commitment is: in the words of one informant:

“We believe that being an excellent school also means having a responsibility to help other schools grow. That is why we involve students and parents in social and educational outreach activities” (Vice Principal for Student Affairs, interview, April 2024).

These initiatives are meant to position the school as a partner not only as an internal achievement strategy but also as a broader social contribution aligned with Muhammadiyah’s mission of educational service and community empowerment.

The seventh principle is school-needs-based partnership. This means that the collaboration with parents is based on the real needs of the school, identified through systematic assessments conducted by the Research and Development (R&D) unit. This ensures that partnerships remain relevant, focused, and effective. One informant explained:

“Parental involvement is not based on assumptions or personal preferences. We first identify the school’s needs through evaluation and assessment, and only then invite parents to collaborate in areas where their contributions are most relevant” (Head of Research and Development, interview, May 2024).

Partnerships are not tokenistic but are aligned to assessed institutional needs, so that collaboration with parents is directly linked to priority programs and student development.

The eighth principle is the utilization of networks, both the institutional networks of Muhammadiyah and the professional networks of parents. These networks are used to support teacher training, social projects, cross-cultural learning, and student participation in national and international competitions. One informant described how these networks are used in practice, saying,

“We actively encourage parents to share their professional networks. Some parents who are university lecturers have connected our students with international students, which has significantly enhanced English learning and cultural exposure” (Head of Public Relations, interview, May 2024).

Through the strategic use of institutional and parental networks, the school expands learning opportunities beyond the classroom and strengthens the effectiveness of school–parent partnerships in supporting students’ academic and non-academic development.

3.1.3. Practical Steps in Building Strategic Partnerships

Mudipat takes concrete steps to implement the strategic partnerships in practice. The first phase is to work with parents, both individually and institutionally. At the individual level, the school engages parents with specific expertise in relevant activities, such as infrastructure development planning or regulatory processes. This personal involvement is seen as a form of recognition and reinforces parents' sense of belonging to the school.

Institutionally, the parental involvement is assisted through IKWAM (Ikatan Wali Murid Muhammadiyah), the Parents Association of Muhammadiyah. IKWAM participates actively in school planning and decision-making processes, providing constructive feedback and proposals. Some of these proposals become official school policies after internal review.

These steps underscore this commitment to transparency in management, including financial transparency. Parents are provided with relevant information regarding the management of the school, which in turn builds trust and loyalty over time. As a result, parents eagerly disseminated Mudipat to the wider community, thereby maintaining the school's public appeal.

Another important element in reinforcing partnerships is providing excellent service to students and parents. Students are the focus of all partnership activities and are provided with adequate learning facilities, qualified teachers, and a conducive learning environment. Parents, on the other hand, are provided with comprehensive services comprising regular contact, educational consultation, prompt responses to concerns, and ongoing parenting programs.

3.1.4. Academic and Non-Academic Student Achievement as an Outcome of Partnership

The findings reveal that the student's achievement at Mudipat is not viewed as an individual achievement but as a product of a well-crafted educational ecosystem created by school-parent synergy. In the 2023/2024 academic year, the sixth-grade students have achieved great success in competitions in science, mathematics, English, youth scientific writing, academic Olympiads, and English debates. These were at the city, provincial, national, and international levels, with a total of 124 students involved.

In addition to academic success, students also showed significant success in non-academic areas. The areas of arts, sports, applied sciences, and leadership provided a wide scope for student development. Robotics was one of the most dominant fields of achievement, alongside sports such as archery and pencak silat, and artistic activities such as choir and vocal groups. In that same school year, 133 sixth-graders achieved non-academically.

These results indicate that Mudipat is taking a balanced and sustainable approach towards educational development. Students have many opportunities to develop their talents, interests, and character. So, our students' successes aren't limited to certain academic areas; they're evident in the arts, athletics, technology, and leadership. In general, academic and non-academic achievements provide empirical evidence of the effectiveness of strategic partnerships between schools and parents in fostering a holistic educational ecosystem.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Strategic School–Parent Partnership as a Value-Based Educational Collaboration

The results of this study show that the strategic partnership between the school and parents at SD Muhammadiyah 4 Surabaya (Mudipat) is not only an administrative and procedural relationship, but a value-based educational partnership. This collaboration is purposefully built on the basis of shared values, ongoing communication, and shared responsibility, and parents are viewed as co-educators, not passive consumers of services. This finding contributes to the existing literature on parental involvement, which tends to emphasize participation in isolated activities, by showing how partnership can be an integrated and strategic component of school management.

In previous studies, parental involvement has mostly been conceptualized as communication, participation in school activities, and support for learning at home (Afif et al., 2022; Epstein et al., 2002). These dimensions are also evident at Mudipat, but this study shows a layer of partnership characterized by shared responsibility, transparency, and trust. This lends credence to the assertion made by Massucco (2020) that meaningful school–parent partnerships can only be formed if collaboration is perceived as a shared responsibility, instead of a disjointed set of activities. For Mudipat, partnership is part of the organizational culture and daily affairs of the school, making it sustainable and effective.

3.2.2. Organizational Principles as the Foundation of Partnership Effectiveness

A particularly salient finding is the role of organizational principles—such as internal solidarity, system-oriented management, commitment, contribution, and satisfaction—in sustaining strategic partnerships. The emphasis on internal solidity before external collaboration reflects the collective–collegial tradition of Muhammadiyah, where leadership and responsibility are shared. This finding aligns with Pasingih (2021), who argues that clearly articulated principles serve as the backbone of effective partnerships, ensuring coherence and continuity in collaborative relationships.

The prioritization of systems over individuals is particularly significant, as it minimizes subjectivity and fosters institutional trust. Mohr and Spekman's (1994) framework highlights trust, coordination, and communication as key determinants of partnership success. At Mudipat, trust is reinforced not only through interpersonal relations but also through transparent systems and clearly defined roles. This system-based approach enhances consistency and reduces dependency on individual actors, contributing to the long-term stability of the partnership.

3.2.3. Transparency and Trust as Drivers of Parental Loyalty

The findings further indicate that transparency in school management, particularly financial transparency, plays a central role in strengthening parental trust and loyalty. Parents' access to information regarding school governance fosters a sense of inclusion and ownership, which in turn motivates voluntary support and advocacy for the school. This finding resonates with Lindfors et al. (2018), who identify trust and cooperation between schools and families as forms of social capital that directly influence school performance and student outcomes.

In Mudipat, trust does not merely facilitate smoother communication; it generates active parental engagement, including the promotion of the school within the broader community. This form of engagement reflects a shift from transactional relationships to relational partnerships, where parents perceive their involvement as an investment in a shared educational mission. Such dynamics reinforce Bryson et al.'s (2015) assertion that strategic partnerships are most effective when they are grounded in shared goals and mutual accountability.

3.2.4. Partnership Contributions to Academic Achievement

The data on academic achievement suggest that strategic partnerships contribute to learning outcomes by strengthening continuity between school-based instruction and home-based support. The substantial number of students achieving academic distinctions indicates that achievement is not confined to a small elite group but is distributed across the student population. This finding supports Harini et al. (2024), who emphasize that structured parental involvement enhances academic performance and, by extension, family well-being.

Communication between the school and parents at Mudipat helps align academic supervision, learning expectations, and student preparation for competitions. Such alignment enhances student motivation, discipline, and readiness, reinforcing Iskandar's (2021) view that a conducive learning climate emerges from collaborative relationships between schools and families. The Mudipat case illustrates how strategic partnerships transform parental involvement into a systematic support structure that amplifies academic achievement.

3.2.5. Expanding Non-Academic Achievement through Social Capital and Networks

Beyond academic outcomes, the study highlights the significant role of school–parent partnerships in supporting non-academic achievement. The wide range of extracurricular activities and the high number of students involved reflect an educational approach that values holistic development. Parents' contributions—ranging from logistical support to the provision of professional networks—expand opportunities for students to explore talents in arts, sports, applied sciences, and leadership.

This finding aligns with social capital theory, which posits that access to networks and trust-based relationships enhances individual and collective outcomes (Hikmat, 2025; Shahidul et al., 2015). At Mudipat, parental networks serve as social capital, connecting students to broader learning opportunities, including national and international competitions. These networks not only support program implementation but also widen students' horizons and exposure, contributing to sustained non-academic achievement.

3.2.6. Ecological Continuity between School and Family Environments

The effectiveness of partnerships at Mudipat can also be understood through the lens of ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner's framework emphasizes that children's development is shaped by interactions between key environments, particularly the family and the school. The harmonious relationship between these environments at Mudipat creates ecological continuity, ensuring that students experience consistent values, expectations, and support across contexts (Sekarsari & Fauziah, 2025).

This continuity is evident in the balance between academic and non-academic achievements, suggesting that students benefit from integrated support systems rather than fragmented interventions. The Mudipat case thus illustrates how strategic partnerships operationalize ecological principles in practice, translating theory into tangible educational outcomes.

3.2.7. Islamic Values as the Normative Foundation of Partnership

From the perspective of Islamic education, the strategic partnership in Mudipat is based on the concept of *amanah* (trust and responsibility). The teachings of Islam stress that the moral education of children is the responsibility of the parents, even though the formal education is the responsibility of the educational institutions (QS At-Tahrim [66]:6). The participation of parents in Mudipat is a manifestation of the normative framework, which strengthens the idea of education as a moral obligation of all.

Moreover, parental involvement is a means to instill Islamic values such as *akhlaq*, *tawazun* (balance), and *ta'awun* (mutual assistance). As pointed out by Hakim et al. (2024), effective parental involvement enhances character education by embedding moral values within everyday educational practices. In this context, non-academic achievements such as leadership, discipline, and teamwork can be seen as expressions of character building in line with the ethics of Islamic teachings.

3.2.8. Synthesis of Findings

Taken together, these analyses suggest that the strategic school–parent partnership at Mudipat functions as a holistic educational model that integrates organizational principles, social capital, ecological continuity, and Islamic values. The partnership contributes not only to measurable academic and non-academic outcomes but also to the formation of a coherent educational ecosystem. This model extends existing theories of parental involvement by demonstrating how value-based and culturally grounded partnerships can generate sustainable and meaningful educational impact.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the principles of strategic school-parent partnerships at SD Muhammadiyah 4 Surabaya (Mudipat) are clearly stated and consistently implemented, including: internal solidity, systems rather than individuals, commitment and consistency, contribution, satisfaction, social responsibility, responsiveness to school needs, and the effective use of networks.

In practice, Mudipat manages its strategic partnerships through a number of key mechanisms. Some of them are: parents' personal involvement based on their competencies, parents' institutional involvement in the school decision-making process through IKWAM (Muhammadiyah Parents Association), the implementation of transparent school management, and the provision of excellent services to students and parents. Such partnership practices are not formal or administrative arrangements, but rather stem from a joint recognition of the importance of school–family synergy in supporting children's education.

The findings show that these strategic partnerships play a significant role in students' academic and non-academic achievement. Student success at Mudipat can be summarised as the result of a positive educational environment based on ongoing parent involvement, open

communication between the school and the family, and a mutual dedication to student growth. In this sense, strategic school–parent collaboration is seen not merely as a managerial device but as an educational relationship that is rooted in religious values and cultural coherence.

Further research is encouraged to explore strategic school–parent partnerships in more depth, particularly by studying the factors that facilitate or hinder their implementation, including structural, cultural, and contextual dimensions. Comparative studies across contexts (e.g., public-private, religious-nonreligious) could shed light on the variety and effectiveness of partnership models. Such research is expected to offer valuable guidance for schools seeking to develop or strengthen strategic partnerships with parents in diverse educational contexts.

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