



**PENGARUH MANAJEMEN STRATEGIS TERHADAP KEUNGGULAN
KOMPETITIF LEMBAGA PENDIDIKAN ISLAM (STUDI KASUS
DI MADRASAH IBTIDAIYAH SWASTA (MIS)
MANAR AL UMMAT CIKONENG CIAMIS)**

Wisnu Uriawan, Septiani Maria Dewi, Agung Permana,

Nia Yuniarti, Chaerul Rochman

Program Pascasarjana Manajemen Pendidikan Islam,

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh meningkatnya persaingan antar lembaga pendidikan Islam yang menuntut adanya strategi pengelolaan lembaga secara efektif untuk membangun keunggulan kompetitif. Penelitian bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh manajemen strategis terhadap keunggulan kompetitif di MIS Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng Ciamis. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode deskriptif asosiatif. Populasi penelitian terdiri atas 19 tenaga pendidik dan tenaga kependidikan. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui angket skala Likert dan dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) melalui aplikasi SmartPLS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa prestasi akademik memiliki pengaruh paling dominan terhadap keunggulan kompetitif dengan koefisien jalur sebesar 0,568, diikuti biaya sekolah sebesar 0,214, dan jumlah siswa sebesar 0,023. Nilai R-square sebesar 0,558 menunjukkan bahwa 55,8% variabel keunggulan kompetitif dapat dijelaskan oleh ketiga variabel tersebut. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa penerapan manajemen strategis melalui penguatan prestasi akademik, efisiensi biaya sekolah, dan perkembangan jumlah siswa mampu meningkatkan daya saing lembaga pendidikan Islam secara berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Manajemen Strategis, Keunggulan Kompetitif, Pendidikan Islam, Prestasi Akademik, Daya Saing Lembaga.

INTRODUCTION

Global transformations marked by technological advancements, social changes, and increasing demands for educational quality have created increasingly fierce competition among educational institutions, including Islamic educational institutions. These conditions require each institution to function not only as a provider of the learning process but also as an institution capable of generating added value through program innovation, improved service quality, and the strengthening of students' character. In this context, the success of educational institutions is greatly influenced by their ability to formulate and implement strategies that are adaptive to changes in both the external and internal environments (Abra, 2024; Aminullah & Amiruddin, 2025).

Competition among educational institutions has shifted from merely competing over student enrollment to competing on quality and service differentiation. Therefore, the concept of competitive advantage has become one of the key indicators determining the sustainability and survival of educational institutions. Competitive advantage refers to an institution's ability to create greater value than its competitors through the development of distinctive programs, improvements in service quality, learning innovations, and the strengthening of an institutional identity that is difficult for other institutions to replicate (Hifza & Aslan, 2020). From an Islamic education perspective, competitive advantage is built not only through academic achievements but also through the integration of Islamic values, character building, and the strengthening of a religious culture that serves as the institution's distinctive hallmark (Hadijaya et al., 2023).

Efforts to achieve this competitive advantage require the implementation of effective strategic

management. Strategic management is a series of systematic processes that include planning, implementing, controlling, and evaluating strategies to achieve organizational goals in a sustainable manner. Through strategic management, educational institutions can optimize the use of resources, anticipate environmental changes, and enhance their ability to adapt to various contemporary educational challenges (Baharuddin, 2019; Kautsar & Julaiha, 2023). In the context of Islamic education, strategic management is not only oriented toward organizational efficiency but is also aimed at realizing a quality of education that encompasses the intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social aspects of students in a balanced manner (Munandar, 2020).

The implementation of strategic management in Islamic educational institutions can be achieved through the development of flagship programs, curriculum innovation, strengthening organizational culture, and improving the quality of human resources. Institutions that are able to integrate academic programs with Islamic values tend to have a stronger position in differentiating their educational services. Qur'an memorization programs, strengthening foreign language proficiency, fostering a habit of worship, and character development are some of the strategies widely implemented to enhance the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions (Aimah & Quswa, 2019). These strategies enable institutions to build a unique identity that can increase public trust and strengthen the institution's reputation.

One Islamic educational institution facing these competitive dynamics is MIS Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng Ciamis. As a private madrasah situated in an area dominated by public schools with relatively better facilities, MIS Manar Al Ummat is required to develop strategies capable of attracting

public interest while maintaining its existence. These challenges have prompted the institution to implement various innovations focused on improving quality and differentiating its educational services.

MIS Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng Ciamis offers a number of flagship programs that define the school's unique character. These programs include daily Arabic and English vocabulary memorization drills, the "One Day One Ayat" program to improve students' ability to memorize the Qur'an, and various religious activities integrated into the full-day school curriculum. Through these programs, the madrasah strives to foster a balance between academic excellence, language proficiency, and the development of students' religious character from an early age.

In addition to these flagship programs, MIS Manar Al Ummat also implements a tuition-free education policy for students. All of the institution's operational needs are supported through the use of School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds, which are managed effectively and accountably. This tuition-free policy serves as a key differentiation strategy that provides broader access to education for the community while enhancing the institution's appeal. This strategy demonstrates that competitive advantage is built not only through the quality of educational programs but also through the institution's ability to provide services that meet the needs of the community (Hadijaya et al., 2023; Samrin et al., 2018).

The success of MIS Manar Al Ummat in developing religious programs, language enrichment, a full-day school system, and a tuition-free policy demonstrates the implementation of strategic management focused on creating added value for the community. These various strategies serve as crucial

assets in building the competitive advantage that distinguishes the madrasah from other educational institutions. This aligns with the Resource-Based View theory, which explains that an organization can achieve sustainable competitive advantage if it is able to manage resources that are unique, valuable, and difficult for competitors to imitate (Hifza & Aslan, 2020).

Numerous studies on strategic management in Islamic educational institutions have been conducted, with a primary focus on improving the quality of education. Research by Aimah & Quswa (2019) shows that the implementation of strategic management at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Banyuwangi is carried out through systematic stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation, thereby improving the quality of educational services. Similar findings were presented by Baharuddin, who explained that strategic management serves as a crucial instrument in quality control within educational institutions through the management of vision, mission, objectives, and well-directed work programs. Both studies treat educational quality as an outcome variable, while the dimension of an institution's competitive advantage has not yet been the primary focus of analysis.

Another study conducted by Hadijaya et al. (2023) confirms that strategic management can improve the quality of Islamic educational institutions by strengthening organizational culture, developing human resources, and innovating educational programs. Meanwhile, Hifza & Aslan (2020) developed a model of competitive advantage for private Islamic educational institutions by emphasizing the importance of service differentiation, reinforcing Islamic values, and managing unique internal

resources. This research reinforces the Resource-Based View (RBV) perspective, which states that competitive advantage is built on resources that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and difficult to substitute. However, the study by Hifza and Aslan is more conceptual in nature and has not yet empirically tested the relationship between strategic management indicators and the competitive advantage of educational institutions.

In a broader context, Hallinger & Chen (2015) found that educational leadership and school strategic management have a significant impact on the reputation and performance of educational institutions. These findings are reinforced by Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka (2015), who explain that the competitiveness of educational institutions is greatly influenced by public perceptions of service quality, the value offered, and the institution's image. However, these studies were primarily conducted in the contexts of general education and higher education, and thus remain limited in explaining the characteristics of elementary Islamic educational institutions that have both academic and religious orientations.

Based on a review of previous research, there is a research gap that forms the basis for the originality of this study. Most previous studies have identified strategic management as a factor influencing educational quality, whereas research on the direct impact of strategic management on the competitive advantage of Islamic educational institutions remains relatively limited. Furthermore, previous studies generally used indicators of strategy planning, implementation, and evaluation, whereas this study adopts a different approach by measuring strategic management through indicators of school costs, student enrollment, and academic achievement as representations of the institution's

strategy implementation. Thus, this study offers a new perspective in explaining how these strategic factors contribute to the development of competitive advantage at the Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng Ciamis Private Elementary Madrasah (MIS).

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to analyze the influence of strategic management on competitive advantage at MIS Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng, Ciamis. This research is important because there are still limited empirical studies examining the relationship between the implementation of strategic management and competitive advantage in elementary-level Islamic educational institutions. The results of this study are expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic educational management as well as serve as a practical reference for educational institution administrators in formulating effective strategies to continuously improve the institution's competitiveness and quality.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach using a descriptive-associative-causal method aimed at analyzing both the relationship and the influence between the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables in this study are strategic management indicators, consisting of School Costs, Number of Students, and Academic Achievement. Meanwhile, the dependent variable in this study is the competitive advantage of Islamic educational institutions. A quantitative approach was chosen because it can provide an empirical picture of the conditions of the research variables and objectively test the causal relationships between variables through statistical analysis.

The study population consisted of all teaching and non-teaching staff at

MIS Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng Ciamis, totaling 19 individuals. Because the population size was relatively small, this study employed a saturation sampling technique, in which all members of the population were included in the sample. This technique was chosen so that the data obtained would provide a comprehensive representation of the population.

In the first stage, data collection was conducted by distributing questionnaires to respondents using a 0–8 Likert scale to measure perceptions of the variables School Costs, Number of Students, Academic Achievement, and Competitive Advantage. In addition, documentation was used as supporting data to obtain information regarding the condition of the institutions, madrasah programs, and other administrative data relevant to the study.

In the second stage, the research instrument consisted of a closed-ended questionnaire designed based on the indicators for each research variable. Before being used in the data collection process, the instrument was first tested for validity and reliability using the SmartPLS application. The validity test was conducted by measuring outer loadings to ensure that each indicator accurately represented the variable construct, with a criterion of a factor loading value greater than 0.70. Meanwhile, the reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's alpha to determine the level of internal consistency of the research instrument. The test results showed that all variables had Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70, so the instrument was deemed reliable and suitable for use in the study.

In the final stage, data analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling

(PLS-SEM) approach via the SmartPLS software. The analysis began with an outer model test, which included tests of convergent validity and construct reliability. Next, the inner model was tested to determine the relationships between variables using path coefficients and the coefficient of determination (R-squared). Hypothesis testing was conducted to determine the magnitude of the independent variables' effects on the dependent variable based on the path coefficients and the significance of the relationships between variables.

The hypotheses in this study are H_0 : Strategic management of student enrollment, tuition fees, and academic achievement has no effect on the competitive advantage of Islamic educational institutions, and H_1 : Strategic management of student enrollment, tuition fees, and academic achievement has an effect on the competitive advantage of Islamic educational institutions.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Based on the results of structural model analysis (inner model) using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach via the SmartPLS application, this study examined the effects of three independent variables—Number of Students (JS), Academic Achievement (AA), and School Fees (SF), on the dependent variable Competitive Advantage (CA) at MIS Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng Ciamis. The results of the analysis are presented through indicator validity testing, path coefficients between variables, the model's coefficient of determination, and construct reliability testing.

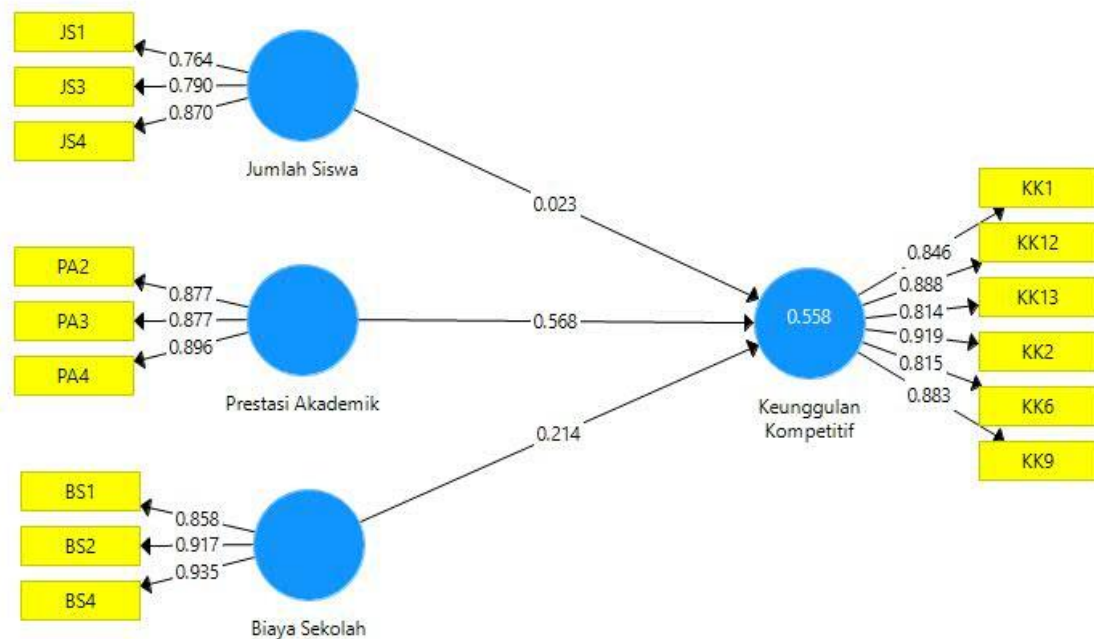


Figure 1. Output Results of the Structural Model Analysis

Source: Data analyzed in SmartPLS (2026)

Table 1. Outer Loading

	School Fees	Number of Students	Competitive Advantage	Academic Achievements
BS1	0,858			
BS2	0,917			
BS4	0,935			
JS1		0,764		
JS3		0,790		
JS4		0,870		
KK1			0,846	
KK12			0,888	
KK13			0,814	
KK2			0,919	
KK6			0,815	
KK9			0,883	
PA2				0,877
PA3				0,877
PA4				0,896

Source: Data analyzed in SmartPLS (2026)

Based on Table 1 and Figure 1, outer model testing was conducted to ensure that all indicators used were able to validly represent the latent variable constructs. An indicator is considered to meet the criteria for convergent validity if it has a factor loading value above 0.70.

Based on the test results, all indicators in this study met these criteria and are therefore suitable for use in further analysis.

For the Number of Students (JS) variable, indicator JS1 (The number of students at this school has increased year over year) has a loading value of 0.764; indicator JS3 (The school is able to retain its enrolled students, resulting in a relatively low rate of student transfers to other schools) has a loading value of 0.790; and indicator JS4 (The growth in the number of students reflects the community's increasing trust in the school) has a loading value of 0.870. These values indicate that all indicators effectively explain the "Number of Students" construct. Indicator JS4 is the most dominant indicator because it has the highest loading value.

For the Academic Achievement (PA) variable, indicators PA2 (Students are able to participate in and compete in various academic competitions) and PA3 (Teachers and school-based learning programs are effective in supporting improvements in student academic achievement) each received a loading value of 0.877, while indicator PA4

(Students' academic achievement is one of the strengths that enhances the school's appeal in the community) received a loading value of 0.896. The high loading values for all indicators indicate that the academic achievement aspect has very strong measurement consistency in forming the research construct.

Next, for the School Fees (BS) variable, indicator BS1 (School fees set by the school in accordance with the quality of services and facilities provided) has a loading value of 0.858, indicator BS2 (School fees are optimally utilized to support students' learning and academic activities) has a loading value of 0.917, and indicator BS4 (The school provides clear and transparent information to parents regarding the use of school funds) has a loading value of 0.935. These results indicate that the school fees indicators demonstrate excellent validity, particularly indicator BS4, which is the strongest indicator in representing this construct.

As for the Competitive Advantage (CA) variable, all indicators also showed loading values above 0.70, namely CA1 (The school provides good service to students) at 0.846, CA12 (The school continuously innovates to improve the quality of educational services) at 0.888, CA13 (The school has a positive image in the community) at 0.814, CC12 (The school continuously innovates to improve the quality of educational services) at 0.888, CC13 at 0.814, CC2 (The school provides satisfactory service to students' parents) at 0.919, CC6 (The school's flagship programs align with students' needs) at 0.815, and CC9 (Teachers use creative teaching methods in the teaching-learning process) at 0.883. These values indicate that the Competitive Advantage construct has been established by valid and reliable indicators.

Overall, the outer loading results indicate that the research instrument has good measurement quality. Thus, all indicators can be used to analyze the structural relationships among the variables in the research model.

Inner model testing was conducted to determine the magnitude of the direct effect of each independent variable on the Competitive Advantage variable. The results of the analysis indicate that the degree of influence varies across variables.

Table 2. Path Coefficients

	School Fees	Number of Students	Competitive Advantage	Academic Achievements
School Fees			0,214	
Number of Students			0,023	
Competitive Advantage				
Academic Achievements			0,568	

Source: Data analysis in SmartPLS (2026)

Based on Table 2, the Academic Achievement (PA) variable has the most dominant positive influence on Competitive Advantage, with a path coefficient of 0.568. This value indicates that the higher an institution's academic achievement, the higher the school's level of competitive advantage. This finding suggests that academic achievement is a key factor in enhancing the image, appeal, and public trust in educational institutions. In other words, students' academic success plays a major role in strengthening the madrasah's competitive position amid competition among educational institutions.

The School Costs (BS) variable also showed a positive effect on Competitive Advantage, with a coefficient of 0.214. Although its effect is not as significant as that of academic achievement, this result indicates that the management of school costs remains an important factor in enhancing an institution's competitiveness. School costs that are commensurate with the quality of educational services can foster a positive public perception of educational institutions. This indicates that the public considers not only whether costs are low or high but also the alignment between the costs incurred and the quality of services received.

Meanwhile, the variable "Number of Students" (JS) has the lowest positive influence on Competitive Advantage, with a coefficient value of 0.023. This value indicates that an increase in the number of students does not directly contribute significantly to the institution's competitive advantage. This finding suggests that a large number of students does not necessarily reflect a school's quality and competitiveness if it is not accompanied by improvements in educational quality, service quality, and institutional performance.

Based on these results, it is clear that academic quality is a more decisive factor in building competitive advantage than student enrollment. Therefore, strategies to enhance the competitiveness of educational institutions should focus more on strengthening academic quality and the quality of educational services.

The results of the coefficient of determination test show that the R-squared (R^2) value for the Competitive Advantage variable is 0.558. This value indicates that 55.8% of the variance in Competitive Advantage at MIS Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng Ciamis can be explained by the combination of the

variables Number of Students, Academic Achievement, and Tuition Fees.

Meanwhile, the remaining 44.2% is influenced by other factors outside the research model that were not analyzed in this study. These factors may include the quality of human resources, the leadership of the madrasah principal, educational facilities and infrastructure, institutional promotion strategies, the quality of administrative services, organizational culture, and other external factors.

An R-squared value of 0.558 indicates that the research model falls into the moderate-to-strong category. This means that the model developed in this study is fairly effective in explaining the Competitive Advantage variable. Thus, the three independent variables used in this study can be said to make a fairly significant contribution to explaining the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions.

In general, the results of this study indicate that the competitive advantage of educational institutions is more strongly influenced by academic quality than by quantitative factors such as student enrollment. Therefore, efforts to enhance the competitiveness of madrasahs should focus on strengthening academic quality, improving the quality of educational services, and managing school costs in a proportionate manner that prioritizes service quality.

Reliability testing was conducted to determine the level of internal consistency of each indicator in measuring the study's latent variable. The reliability test in this study used Cronbach's Alpha. A construct is considered reliable if it has a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.70. The higher the Cronbach's Alpha value, the better the level of consistency among indicators in measuring the same variable.

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
School Fees	0,894	0,988	0,930	0,817
Number of Students	0,738	0,763	0,850	0,655
Competitive Advantage	0,931	0,942	0,945	0,742
Academic Achievements	0,860	0,873	0,914	0,780

Source: Data analysis in SmartPLS (2026)

Based on the results of the SmartPLS analysis presented in Table 3, all variables in this study showed Cronbach's Alpha values above the required minimum threshold. This indicates that the research instrument has a good level of reliability and can be used consistently to measure the research constructs.

The Number of Students (JS) variable obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.732. This value indicates that the indicators in the Number of Students variable have good internal consistency in representing the research construct.

The Academic Achievement (PA) variable obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.862. This result indicates that the indicators within the Academic Achievement variable have a very high level of reliability, enabling them to measure the construct in a stable and consistent manner.

Furthermore, the School Costs (SC) variable obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.889. This value indicates that the School Costs construct has a very good level of internal consistency. The high reliability value suggests that the school costs indicators mutually support

one another in strongly forming the variable construct.

The Competitive Advantage (CA) variable obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.924. This value indicates a very high level of reliability. Thus, all indicators within the Competitive Advantage variable were found to be highly consistent in measuring the construct under study.

Overall, the results of the reliability tests indicate that all variables in this study met the required reliability criteria. Therefore, the research instrument can be deemed reliable and suitable for use in further analysis. The high Cronbach's Alpha values for each variable also indicate that the research data exhibit a good level of measurement stability and consistency.

Empirically, the results of this study show that the competitive advantage of the Manar Al Ummat Islamic School in Cikoneng, Ciamis, is not influenced by a single aspect but is shaped by the synergy between academic achievement, school cost management strategies, and the institution's ability to increase enrollment. The dominant influence of academic achievement indicates that the quality of educational outcomes is a key factor in building the madrasah's reputation and public trust. On the other hand, school cost strategies provide added value by improving access to education, while student enrollment serves as an indicator of the community's response to the success of the strategies implemented by the institution. Thus, the implementation of targeted strategic management enables Islamic educational institutions to differentiate their services, strengthen their institutional identity, and build sustainable competitive advantage.

The results of the analysis show that the School Costs variable has a positive effect on competitive advantage,

with a path coefficient of 0.214. The highest outer loading values were found in indicator BS4 (Schools provide clear and transparent information to parents regarding the use of school funds) at 0.935 and BS2 (School fees are optimally utilized to support students' learning and academic activities) at 0.917. These findings indicate that the management of education funding is a key aspect in enhancing the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions.

In the context of MIS Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng Ciamis, the free-school policy serves as a key strategy for expanding community access to education. All of the institution's operational costs are optimized through the effective and well-planned management of School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds. This strategy not only provides economic relief to the community but also sets the institution apart from other schools in the surrounding area.

From a strategic management perspective, the free-school policy can be categorized as a form of cost leadership strategy—that is, a strategy to create a competitive advantage through cost efficiency without compromising the quality of educational services. This strategy is particularly relevant in Islamic educational institutions because it aligns with the principles of social justice and Islamic philanthropy, which regard education as a right for all members of society.

The findings of this study are consistent with international research confirming that access to affordable education is closely linked to increased public participation and the competitiveness of educational institutions (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). Furthermore, educational institutions that are able to cultivate a perception of high value in the eyes of the public will find it easier to gain public

loyalty and trust (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015).

In practice, the public considers not only the cost of education—whether it is cheap or expensive—but also the quality of the services provided. Therefore, MIS Manar Al Ummat's success in maintaining academic quality despite offering free schooling is a key factor that strengthens the institution's competitive position.

The Academic Achievement variable was the most dominant factor influencing competitive advantage, with a path coefficient of 0.568. Indicator PA4 (Students' academic achievement is one of the strengths that enhances the school's appeal in the community) obtained the highest outer loading value of 0.896, while indicators PA2 (Students are able to participate in and compete in various academic competitions) and PA3 (Teachers and learning programs at the school are effective in supporting improvements in students' academic achievement) each had a value of 0.877. These results indicate that academic quality is the core element in building the reputation and competitiveness of educational institutions.

The significant influence of academic achievement indicates that the public still considers the quality of education to be the primary factor in choosing a school. In the context of MIS Manar Al Ummat, this success is closely tied to the implementation of strategic management that effectively integrates the general curriculum with specialized Islamic programs through a full-day school system.

The madrasah not only emphasizes formal academic achievement but also fosters students' religious character, skills, and potential through various flagship programs. The reinforcement of Islamic values is realized through the "One Day One Ayat" program, which fosters the habit of memorizing the Qur'an, as well as daily

programs for memorizing Arabic and English vocabulary. In addition to strengthening religious and language aspects, the madrasah also encourages the development of students' talents and interests through various competitive activities. This is evidenced by the students' various achievements, such as first place in the first-grade reading, writing, and arithmetic competition at the subdistrict level; first place in badminton at the Cikoneng subdistrict level; first place in table tennis at the Cikoneng subdistrict level; second place in the Quran memorization competition at the subdistrict level; and second place in the poetry recitation competition at the subdistrict level. These various achievements demonstrate that the student development strategy at the madrasah is not only oriented toward fostering religious character but also toward enhancing students' academic, athletic, artistic, and creative competencies. These programs represent a form of curriculum differentiation that sets the madrasah apart from other schools in the surrounding area and reinforces the institution's image as an Islamic educational institution capable of developing students' potential holistically.

This strategy of integrating academic and spiritual education produces graduates who not only possess cognitive abilities but also strong moral and religious character. As a result, the institution has successfully established a concept of spiritual and academic excellence that has become a major draw for the community.

These findings support the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which posits that competitive advantage can be built through unique, hard-to-imitate internal resources that possess strategic value. In this study, the quality of academic and religious programs

emerged as the institution's primary strategic assets.

The findings of this study are also consistent with international research indicating that the quality of instructional leadership and curriculum management has a significant impact on improving educational quality and school reputation (Hallinger & Chen, 2015). Furthermore, research (OECD, 2021) indicates that schools capable of integrating academic competencies with character development enjoy higher levels of public trust compared to schools that focus solely on academic outcomes.

Thus, academic achievement in this study is understood not only as a measure of test scores, but also as a reflection of the institution's success in developing a holistic, integrative educational system focused on character development among students.

The "Number of Students" variable has the lowest positive influence on competitive advantage, with a path coefficient of 0.023. Nevertheless, indicator JS4 ("Growth in the number of students reflects increasing public trust in the school") has a relatively high outer loading value of 0.870. This indicates that the number of students is still related to competitive advantage, even though it is not a primary factor that directly shapes it.

The low coefficient indicates that the increase in student enrollment is better understood as a result of the institution's successful strategies rather than as the primary cause of its competitive advantage. In other words, the increase in student enrollment is a reflection of the community's response to the quality of educational services provided by the madrasah.

From the perspective of strategic educational management, student enrollment can be viewed as an indicator of public trust. The higher the level of public trust in an institution, the greater

the public's interest in enrolling their children in that institution.

Tabel 4. Data on the Number of Students

No	Tahun Ajaran	Jumlah Murid			Pindahan		Jumlah Total
		L	P	Jumlah	Masuk	Keluar	
1	2013/2014	6	7	13			13
2	2014/2015	1	4	15			28
3	2015/2016	1	2	7	1		48
4	2016/2017	1	0	6	6		70
5	2017/2018	9	3	1	1		92
6	2018/2019	1	0	1	5		117
7	2019/2020	2	0	8		15	130
8	2020/2021	1	1	6		15	132
9	2021/2022	1	3	6		19	142
10	2022/2023	2	5	1		17	167
11	2023/2024	1	3	1		26	170
12	2024/2025	2	5	2		24	176
13	2025/2026	1	6	3		28	187

Source: Data compiled from the MIS of Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng, Ciamis (2026)

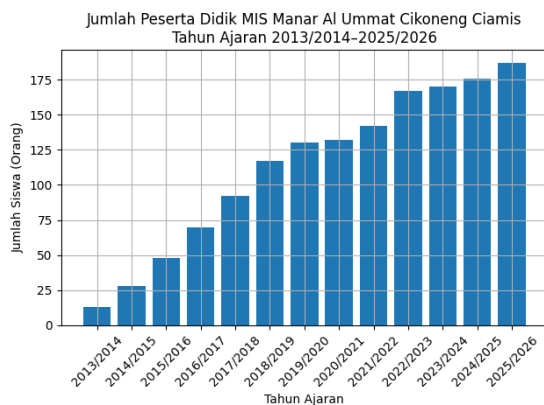


Figure 3. Graph of the Number of Students at MIS Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng, Ciamis, by School Year 2013/2014-2025/2026

Source: Data compiled from the MIS of Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng, Ciamis (2026)

The madrasah's competitive advantage is evident in the very significant increase in the number of students. In its first year, the school had only 13 students. However, over the course of thirteen years, that number

grew to 187 students. This growth reflects the public's increasing confidence in the quality of the madrasah's educational services. The rise in student enrollment can be interpreted as an indicator of the institution's success in building its reputation, public trust, and the distinctiveness of its educational offerings. In the context of competition in elementary education, the public places greater value on tangible evidence of service quality than on mere statements of the institution's vision and mission.

This situation is evident at MIS Manar Al Ummat, which has managed to maintain its existence and student enrollment despite competition from public schools with more comprehensive facilities. The community's trust stems from the madrasah's ability to offer a combination of values considered superior: free tuition, a full-day school program, a Qur'an memorization program, and early foreign language instruction.

This concept aligns with stakeholder theory in education, which positions the community as the primary factor in determining the sustainability of educational institutions. When the community feels that their children's educational needs are being met, their loyalty to the institution will increase. Community loyalty toward educational institutions is strongly influenced by perceptions of service quality and satisfaction with educational outcomes (Ng & Forbes, 2009). The higher the community's satisfaction, the stronger the institution's reputation and sustainability.

Overall, the research findings indicate that the strategic management at MIS Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng, Ciamis, has successfully built a competitive advantage through a combination of cost-efficiency strategies, strengthening academic quality, and building community trust. The

institution's competitive advantage is not built solely on physical aspects or facilities, but through its ability to create educational value that is relevant to the community's needs.

A strategy of free schooling, combined with outstanding academic and religious programs, has succeeded in creating a strong competitive edge in the primary education sector. This demonstrates that limited facilities are not always the main obstacle if an institution is able to manage its resources strategically and innovatively.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the view that Islamic educational institutions have a great opportunity to build a sustainable competitive advantage if they are able to integrate strategic management, academic quality, religious values, and educational services oriented toward community needs. Thus, the success of MIS Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng Ciamis can serve as a model for strategic development for other Islamic educational institutions in enhancing their competitiveness in the era of modern educational competition.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of strategic management has a positive impact on the development of competitive advantage at MIS Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng, Ciamis. The results of the analysis using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach indicate that the madrasah's competitive advantage is influenced by three main aspects: academic performance, tuition fees, and student enrollment. Together, these three aspects account for 55.8% of the variation in the institution's competitive advantage, indicating that the research model is quite effective in

describing the factors that shape the madrasah's competitiveness.

Academic achievement is the most dominant factor in enhancing an institution's competitive advantage, with a path coefficient of 0.568. This indicates that the quality of instruction, student achievement, and academic development programs are strategic elements in building the madrasah's public image and public trust. In addition, tuition fees also have a positive influence through financing management strategies that improve accessibility and serve as a form of differentiation in educational services. Meanwhile, student enrollment has a positive influence with a relatively small contribution; thus, it is better understood as an indicator of increasing public trust in the quality of educational services provided.

Overall, this study confirms that the competitive advantage of Islamic educational institutions is not solely determined by facilities or student enrollment, but rather by the institution's ability to manage strategic resources, improve academic quality, provide educational services that meet community needs, and create flagship programs that define the institution's identity. The implementation of focused strategic management has enabled MIS Manar Al Ummat Cikoneng Ciamis to maintain its competitiveness through the integration of academic quality, Islamic values, and sustainable educational services.

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