

ANALYSIS OF PARENTAL CHOICE:
ISLAMIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT
IN FLORIDA

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to discover and interpret reasons Florida parents enrolled their children in Islamic schools. A selection of 30 parents from 3 different schools in Florida were interviewed by the researcher using a semi-structured interview guide which used both oral and written responses. The sample was matched according to the gender of parents interviewed - 15 mothers and 15 fathers were interviewed. The sample was matched according to the gender of the referent child. Out of 30 referent children, 15 were female and 15 were male. The researcher included children of all grade levels. Fifteen were from primary grades (1-5) and 15 were from secondary grades (6-12).

The researcher served as the primary instrument for data collection. Data were summarized and reported in a descriptive format addressing each research question. Results indicated that the first reason for choosing Islamic schools was religious; the second reason was sociocultural and the last reason was academic. Many parents who enrolled their children in Islamic schools strongly envisioned the need to create schools where children could pursue the Islamic knowledge, preserve Islamic identity and develop the Islamic personality. Parents wanted to guard and shield

their progeny from the negative influence (violence, drugs, promiscuity, prejudice, etc.) of the public schools. The academic concern was not a major reason for the majority of responding parents. A significant finding affirmed that Islamic education does not separate between religious and social factors.

Findings indicated that parents were more attracted to Islamic schools than dissatisfied with public schools. Muslim parents were concerned with retaining their children's identity and religious commitment. At the same time, they wanted them to learn in a safe environment which galvanized them against negative effects of the dominant culture, and be able to survive the tide of assimilation, secular pressure and moral deterioration.

This study is humbly dedicated to God for all his favors He has bestowed upon me. A special dedication to my beloved husband, Dr. Monzer ElKhaldy, who loved me and empowered me to move forward without ever looking back.

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