

School Principals' Strategies for Managing Students' Educational Continuation in Rural Agrarian Communities

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ABSTRACT

Managing students' educational continuation in rural agrarian communities has become an important issue in educational management because many students do not continue their education to the senior secondary level despite the availability of educational institutions. The purpose of this article is to analyze the strategies of school principals in managing students' educational continuation in MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin, MTs Darul Munajah, SMP Taruna Jaya, and SMP Mafatihussalam. A mixed-methods approach with a multi-case study design was employed by integrating qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data were obtained from documentation of graduates' educational continuation in the 2025/2026 academic year, while qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving principals, teachers, students, and parents. The findings reveal that students' educational continuation is influenced not only by access to secondary education but also by agrarian family work culture, parental educational orientation, and the intensity of school-family communication. Schools that implemented structured socialization programs, career guidance, home visits, and collaborative partnerships with parents and the community demonstrated better educational continuation outcomes. The study also indicates that educational continuation management becomes more effective when it is organized through integrated planning, organizing, implementation, partnership, and evaluation processes. An integrated and community-based educational management approach is therefore essential for strengthening collaboration among schools, families, and local communities and for supporting students in continuing their education to the senior secondary level in agrarian rural areas.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a strategic instrument for developing competitive and sustainable human resources. From the perspective of national development, students' educational continuity from primary to secondary education constitutes an important indicator of the success of the educational

system. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System affirms that every citizen has the right to obtain quality education and equal opportunities to develop his or her potential [1]. Education is a strategic instrument for developing competitive and sustainable human resources. From the perspective of national development, students' educational continuity from primary to secondary education constitutes an important indicator of the success of the educational system. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System affirms that every citizen has the right to obtain quality education and equal opportunities to develop his or her potential.

Theoretically, school principals play a central role as educational managers who are responsible for the planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision of all school programs, including programs related to students' educational continuation [2]. Effective school leadership is not merely oriented toward administrative and instructional management, but also toward the development of a long-term educational vision for students. From the perspective of educational management, educational continuation is influenced by the school's ability to establish communication with parents, provide career guidance services, and foster students' educational motivation and aspirations [3]. Such an ideal position places school principals as agents of social change who are capable of bridging the interests of the school with the needs of the community. However, in practice, many schools in rural areas still encounter difficulties in maintaining graduates' educational continuation due to the low educational orientation of families and the strong influence of traditional occupations, which are often perceived as more realistic than pursuing secondary education [4].

This phenomenon is clearly evident in rural agrarian communities whose livelihoods largely depend on agriculture, plantations, and the management of family-owned land. Students who have completed their education at the MTs or junior secondary school level frequently prefer to assist their parents in cultivating rice fields, farms, or plantations rather than continue their education to SMA, MA, or vocational secondary schools (SMK). Such decisions are not solely caused by the high cost of education, but rather by the perception that farming activities are sufficient to ensure the economic sustainability of the family. In fact, contemporary social developments indicate that population density continues to increase, the demand for land for residential purposes is becoming greater, and the availability of productive agricultural land tends to decline. This situation creates a contradiction between the educational choices commonly made by rural communities and the demands of ongoing social and economic transformations that require improvements in the quality of human resources through secondary and higher education[5].

Sidoharjo Village represents a particularly relevant example of this phenomenon because it possesses a relatively comprehensive educational ecosystem, ranging from early childhood education, elementary schools, Islamic elementary schools (madrasah ibtidaiyah), Islamic junior secondary schools (MTs), junior secondary schools (SMP), Islamic senior secondary schools (MA), senior secondary schools (SMA), to higher education institutions. The existence of these educational institutions can be seen in the following table.

Tabel 1. The Educational Ecosystem of Sidoharjo Village

No.	Educational Level	Educational Institutions
1	Early Childhood Education	1. RA Hidayatul Mubtadiin 2. RA Darul Munajah 3. TK Taruna Jaya 4. KB Mawar
2	Elementary Education	1. SDN 1 Sidoharjo 2. SDN 2 Sidoharjo 3. MI Darul Munajah
3	Lower Secondary Education	1. MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin 2. MTs Darul Munajah 3. SMP Taruna Jaya 4. SMP Mafatihussalam
4	Upper Secondary Education	1. MA Hidayatul Mubtadiin 2. MA Darul Munajah 3. SMA Fatahillah

4. SMA Mafatihussalam	
5	Higher Education
1. Universitas Islam An Nur Lampung	

Source: *Educational institution data of Sidoharjo Village, 2026.*

Ideally, the availability of a comprehensive educational infrastructure should ensure educational continuity from elementary education to higher education. Nevertheless, the number of students who continue their education after graduating from MTs and SMP remains relatively low, causing several secondary schools to experience shortages in new student enrollment. [6] .

The low level of students' educational continuation despite the availability of educational institutions raises a fundamental question regarding the effectiveness of school strategies in fostering educational awareness within the community. When access to education is already available and educational costs are relatively affordable, the main inhibiting factors are likely to lie in social, cultural, and managerial aspects. In the context of agrarian communities, educational decisions are often influenced by family values, inherited work traditions, and pragmatic views concerning the benefits of formal education. Children who are considered capable of assisting their parents' work are more likely to be prioritized for employment rather than encouraged to continue their education. This condition reflects a gap between the objectives of national education, which promote the expansion and equalization of secondary education, and the social reality of rural communities that still perceive further education as a less urgent option compared with providing direct economic contributions to the family. [7].

In the field of educational management, students' educational continuation constitutes an integral part of schools' efforts to maintain the continuity of students' educational processes toward higher levels of education. Several studies have shown that the successful transition of students from primary to secondary education is influenced by school leadership, parental support, the social environment, and educational guidance services. Research on educational leadership emphasizes that school principals who are able to build a shared educational vision with the community have greater opportunities to improve students' educational participation [8]. Other studies indicate that parental involvement and school-family communication significantly influence students' decisions to continue their education [9]. Nevertheless, most of these studies have been conducted in urban contexts or in schools with different social characteristics, and therefore have paid limited attention to students' educational continuation in rural agrarian communities where family work culture remains particularly strong.

Studies on agrarian communities from an educational perspective also indicate that family occupational orientation may influence children's educational aspirations. In farming families that possess relatively extensive landholdings, education is often perceived as providing fewer immediate economic benefits than direct involvement in agricultural activities. However, research on rural social transformation suggests that agricultural modernization, changes in land ownership structures, and increasing demands for workforce competencies require younger generations to attain higher levels of education in order to adapt to socio-economic changes[10]. Accordingly, there is a mismatch between the current educational orientation of agrarian communities and future demands that increasingly require literacy, technological competence, and adaptive skills. This mismatch constitutes the source of the academic anxiety underlying the present study, as it may lead to the emergence of a younger generation that is insufficiently prepared to face changes in the rural economic structure.

A review of previous studies indicates that most research on low participation in secondary education has primarily focused on economic factors, learning motivation, or the general influence of the family environment. Studies concerning school principals' strategies have generally concentrated on improving the quality of instruction, academic supervision, and the development of school culture. Meanwhile, research that specifically links school principals' strategies with the management of students' educational continuation in rural agrarian communities remains relatively limited. This limitation reveals an important research gap that requires more in-depth investigation. The present study seeks to address this gap by positioning school principals as the primary actors in managing students' educational continuation through an educational management approach that is contextualized to the characteristics of rural agrarian communities.

The position of this study differs from previous research because it does not regard low educational continuation merely as an economic issue or a matter of students' individual motivation. Instead, this study views the phenomenon as an educational management issue related to schools' ability to build educational awareness, social communication, and future-oriented perspectives within the community. The focus of the study is directed toward school principals' strategies in planning educational continuation programs, organizing school resources, establishing partnerships with parents and community leaders, and evaluating efforts to improve students' educational continuation. Therefore, this study possesses both theoretical significance for the development of educational management studies based on agrarian communities and practical significance for rural schools that encounter similar educational challenges.

Conceptually, school principals' strategies in managing students' educational continuation can be understood as a series of systematic actions designed to influence students' and families' decisions to continue education to the next level. These strategies include strengthening guidance and counseling services, socializing the importance of secondary education, providing parental assistance, mapping students' interests and potentials, and developing networks with secondary schools [11]. In agrarian communities, such strategies need to be adapted to local socio-cultural conditions so that they do not conflict with community values. Persuasive, participatory, and family-based approaches are considered more effective than administrative approaches that merely emphasize the obligation to continue schooling. Therefore, this study is important for understanding how school principals design and implement strategies that are adaptive to the characteristics of rural agrarian communities.

The selection of MTs Hidayatul Muhtadiin, MTs Darul Munajah, SMP Taruna Jaya, and SMP Mafatihussalam as the research sites was based on the consideration that these schools are located within the same social environment and encounter relatively similar challenges regarding students' educational continuation. These four schools represent lower secondary educational institutions in Sidoharjo Village that directly interact with the surrounding agrarian community. Using a mixed-methods multi-case study approach, this study seeks to explore comprehensively the experiences, strategies, challenges, and practices related to the management of students' educational continuation implemented by school principals, while also analyzing patterns of graduates' educational continuation across the four research sites. The multi-case approach enables the researcher to conduct cross-school comparisons to identify effective strategic patterns and examine factors contributing to variations in the success of encouraging students to continue their education. [12].

From the perspective of educational policy, the issue of students' educational continuation in agrarian communities has broad implications for the development of rural human resources. Low continuation rates may result in limited workforce quality, low social mobility, and reduced capacity of younger generations to respond to economic changes driven by technology and information. If this condition persists, the existence of comprehensive educational institutions in the village will not provide an optimal contribution to improving the quality of community life [13]. Therefore, a more comprehensive understanding is needed regarding how schools can function not only as providers of instruction, but also as institutions that foster educational aspirations and promote social transformation within rural communities.

Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of the field of Islamic Educational Management, particularly in the areas of educational leadership, community-based educational management, and the management of students' educational continuation in rural agrarian contexts. The findings are expected to enrich the concept of school principals' strategies, which has largely been developed within urban school settings or schools with different socio-economic characteristics. Furthermore, this study may provide a foundation for the development of a more contextual educational management model that is responsive to agrarian communities undergoing social and economic transformation.

Practically, the findings of this study are expected to provide insights for school principals, teachers, madrasah administrators, and educational policymakers in designing programs to improve students' educational continuation in rural areas. The findings are also expected to help communities recognize the importance of secondary education as a long-term investment for the future of younger

generations, particularly in responding to changes in economic structures and the increasing limitations of agricultural land. Therefore, the study entitled *“School Principals’ Strategies in Managing Students’ educational continuation in Rural Agrarian Communities”* possesses strong academic and practical significance and deserves in-depth investigation as an effort to strengthen educational continuity and human resource development in rural agrarian areas.

2. METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach that integrated qualitative and quantitative data in a complementary manner [14]. This approach was selected because the study aimed not only to describe school principals’ strategies in managing students’ educational continuation in rural agrarian communities but also to analyze patterns of graduates’ educational continuation based on numerical data obtained from four research sites, namely MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin, MTs Darul Munajah, SMP Taruna Jaya, and SMP Mafatihussalam. Quantitative data were used to identify the number of graduates and the percentage of students who continued and did not continue their education to the SMA/MA/SMK level in the 2025/2026 academic year. Meanwhile, qualitative data were used to explore the factors influencing students’ educational continuation, school management strategies, and the socio-cultural context of rural agrarian communities. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enabled the researcher to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon by combining statistical patterns with the experiences and perspectives of research participants [15].

The research was conducted in four lower secondary educational institutions located in Sidoharjo Village, namely MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin, MTs Darul Munajah, SMP Taruna Jaya, and SMP Mafatihussalam. These schools were selected because they are located within the same social environment and face relatively similar challenges related to students’ educational continuation in rural agrarian communities. The selection of these research sites enabled the researcher to examine differences and similarities in school management strategies, community characteristics, and students’ educational continuation patterns across the four institutions.

The data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with participants who had direct knowledge and involvement in managing or making decisions regarding students’ educational continuation. The participants consisted of school principals, vice principals for student affairs, guidance and counseling teachers, ninth-grade homeroom teachers, students, and parents of students who continued and those who did not continue their education to the SMA/MA/SMK level.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance, knowledge, and direct involvement in the research phenomenon. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) school principals and school personnel who were directly involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating educational continuation programs; (2) ninth-grade students who graduated in the 2025/2026 academic year; and (3) parents who were involved in decisions regarding their children’s continuation of education after graduation.

A total of 32 participants participated in the interviews. The participants consisted of four school principals, four vice principals for student affairs, four guidance and counseling teachers, four ninth-grade homeroom teachers, eight students, and eight parents from the four research sites. The student and parent participants represented both categories of graduates, namely students who continued their education and students who did not continue their education to the SMA/MA/SMK level. This participant composition was intended to obtain diverse perspectives regarding school strategies, family considerations, and socio-cultural factors influencing students’ educational continuation decisions.

In addition to interviews, participatory observations were conducted during educational continuation socialization activities, parent meetings, career guidance services, and school–community interactions. Secondary data were obtained from school documents, graduation records for the 2025/2026 academic year, new student admission reports, graduates’ educational continuation records, and other relevant supporting documents. Data collection techniques were conducted through triangulation to obtain valid, in-depth, and research-relevant information [16].

Data analysis was conducted in two stages. First, quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, percentages, and cross-school comparisons to describe graduates' educational continuation patterns. Second, qualitative data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification [17]. During the data reduction process, the researcher organized and categorized the data based on emerging themes, including parental perceptions of education, agrarian work culture, school principals' strategies, and factors influencing students' educational continuation. Data presentation was conducted through tables, matrices, and analytical narratives that integrated quantitative and qualitative findings.

The credibility and reliability of qualitative findings were ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement in the research setting. These procedures were implemented to ensure that the findings accurately represented the perspectives and experiences of the research participants [17].

The research framework focuses on students' educational continuation in rural agrarian communities by analyzing the relationship between family socio-cultural conditions, school principals' strategies, and students' decisions to continue their education. The factors examined include agrarian work culture, parents' perceptions of education, students' involvement in family agricultural activities, and changes in rural land-use structures. School principals' strategies were analyzed through educational continuation program planning, organization of school resources, implementation of socialization and career guidance programs, partnerships with families and communities, and evaluation of graduates' educational continuation. The integration of social-community factors and school management strategies provides an understanding of an effective model for managing students' educational continuation in rural agrarian communities.

Figure 1 : Research Framework

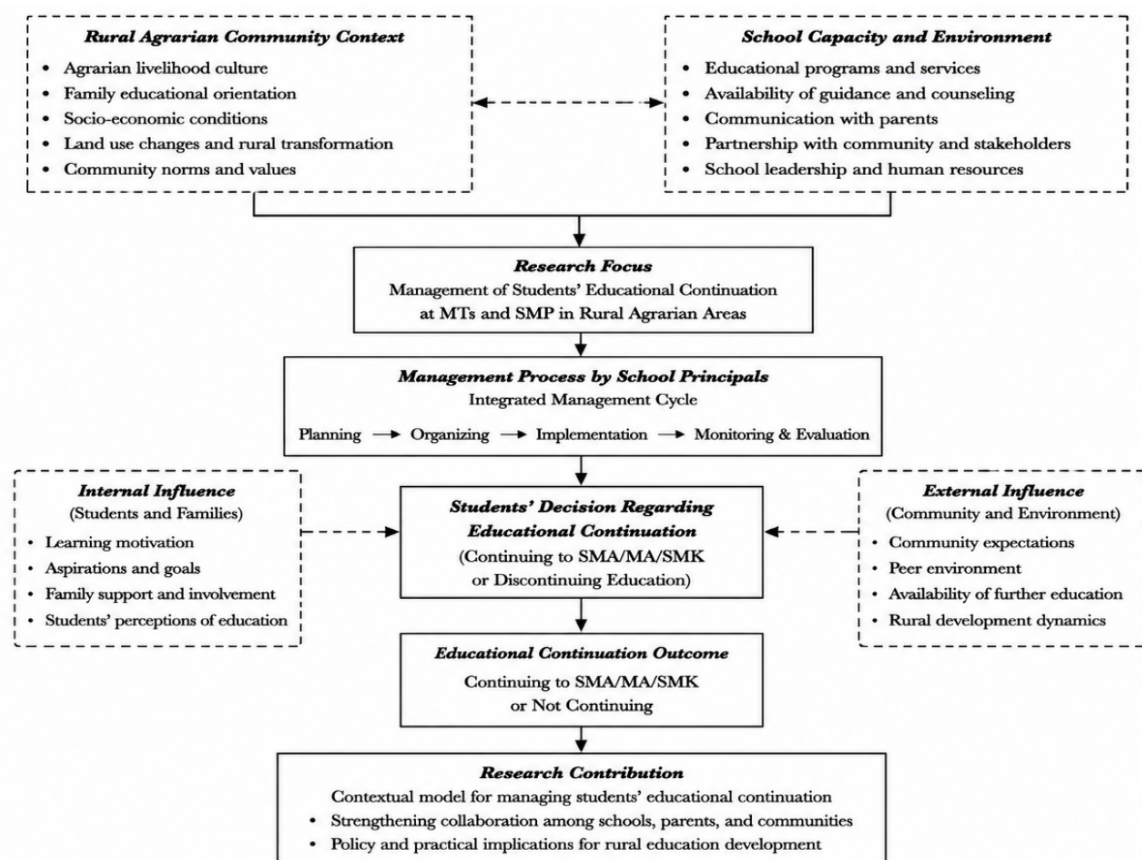


Figure 1. Research Framework for Managing Students' Educational Continuation in Rural Agrarian Communities.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Graduates' Educational Continuation

Research findings indicate that graduates' educational continuation in the four lower secondary schools in Sidoharjo Village still faces considerable challenges. Based on school documentation and interviews with school principals, guidance and counseling teachers, and ninth-grade homeroom teachers, not all graduates of the 2025/2026 academic year continued their education to the SMA/MA/SMK level, even though secondary educational institutions were available within the same village environment. Some students chose to assist their parents in managing rice fields, farms, and plantations after completing their education at the MTs or SMP level. This phenomenon demonstrates that students' educational continuation is influenced not only by educational access but also by the agrarian work culture of families and household economic orientation. This condition constitutes an important concern in educational management studies because schools are expected not only to graduate students, but also to ensure the continuity of their education at the next educational level.

Table 2. Data on Graduates' Educational Continuation in the 2025/2026 Academic Year

No.	School	Number of Graduates	Continued to SMA/MA/SMK	Did Not Continue
1	MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin	48	32	16
2	MTs Darul Munajah	41	23	18
3	SMP Taruna Jaya	37	21	16
4	SMP Mafatihussalam	34	18	16
Total			160	94

Source: Researcher's field data, 2026.

The data presented in Table 1 show that out of a total of 160 graduates, 94 students (58.8%) continued their education to the SMA/MA/SMK level, while 66 students (41.2%) did not continue their studies. This percentage indicates that graduates' educational continuation remains at a moderate level, as more than forty percent of graduates did not proceed to upper secondary education. MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin recorded the highest educational continuation rate, with 32 students continuing their education and 16 students not continuing. This condition suggests that the school achieved a better level of success than the other three schools in encouraging students to pursue further education. The findings indicate that school management strategies contribute to shaping the educational aspirations of students and their families.

Differences in educational continuation rates among schools indicate that the intensity of school management strategies influences students' educational decisions. MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin achieved an educational continuation rate of 66.7%, while MTs Darul Munajah reached 56.1%, SMP Taruna Jaya 56.8%, and SMP Mafatihussalam 52.9%. These percentages suggest that schools with more active communication with parents and more structured educational continuation socialization programs tend to achieve higher levels of educational continuity. The principal of MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin explained that the school regularly conducts parent meetings and provides information regarding available SMA, MA, and SMK options in the Sidoharjo area. In contrast, in schools where communication intensity is lower, students' educational decisions are more strongly influenced by family considerations than by school recommendations.

These findings are consistent with the theory proposed by Agus Gunawa, which states that school principals function as educational leaders responsible for building students' future-oriented vision through career development and educational continuity programs [18]. According to the concept of school-based management, school success is measured not only by graduation rates but also by the school's ability to direct graduates toward higher levels of education [19]. In the context of this study, the relatively close proximity of upper secondary schools has not been sufficient to significantly increase educational continuation rates because the management of students' educational aspirations has not yet been implemented optimally. Principals who actively provide guidance and maintain communication with parents tend to develop stronger educational awareness within families. Therefore, school leadership becomes a crucial factor in linking formal educational processes with students' future educational orientation.

The findings of this study are also in line with the work of Yogi Kurniawan Prayetno, who emphasizes that parental involvement and school–family communication are important factors influencing students’ decisions to continue their education [20]. Interviews with several parents revealed that decisions not to continue schooling were influenced more by the family’s labor needs in the agricultural sector than by limitations in educational costs. Parents considered that children who had completed MTs or SMP were sufficiently capable of assisting with family work, so secondary education was not perceived as providing immediate economic benefits. These findings reinforce previous studies on agrarian communities, which demonstrate that family work culture may contribute to low educational aspirations among children in rural areas. This condition indicates that school strategies should be directed not only toward students, but also toward families as the primary decision-makers in educational continuity.

Further analysis shows that the low level of educational continuation in these four schools reflects a structural problem in managing the transition from lower secondary to upper secondary education. Although schools have formally implemented the learning process, they have not yet fully succeeded in fostering long-term educational awareness among students and their families. This condition is consistent with the view of Hermi Oppier, who argues that the social transformation of rural communities requires education capable of shifting community orientation from merely fulfilling short-term economic needs toward the long-term development of human resource quality [21]. Accordingly, the findings in this subsection indicate that graduates’ educational continuation in Sidoharjo Village remains strongly influenced by agrarian family culture, thereby requiring school leadership strategies that are more adaptive, participatory, and oriented toward strengthening educational awareness within rural communities.

3.2. Perceptions of Parents in Agrarian Communities toward Further Education

The findings indicate that the low rate of graduates’ continuation to higher levels of education cannot be separated from parents’ perceptions of the importance of secondary education. Based on interviews with the parents of students from the four schools included in the study, most parents still perceive education up to the level of *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs) or junior secondary school (SMP) as sufficient for living in rural communities. They believe that the abilities to read, write, perform basic calculations, and understand fundamental religious principles are adequate to support their children’s involvement in family agricultural activities. This perception has resulted in upper secondary education not yet being regarded as a primary family need. Some parents even stated that continuing education is often perceived as merely increasing the amount of time spent in school while reducing their children’s contribution to work in the family’s rice fields, agricultural fields, and plantations.

Table 3. Factors Influencing Students’ Decisions Not to Continue Their Education

No.	Factors	Frequency of Occurrence
1	Assisting parents with farming activities	27
2	Lack of motivation to continue education	15
3	Peer influence	9
4	Early marriage	5
5	Choosing to work	10
Total		66

Source: Researcher’s field data, 2026.

The data in Table 2 indicate that the most dominant factor contributing to students’ decision not to continue their education was helping their parents with farming activities, accounting for 27 cases, or approximately 40.9% of all students who did not continue their education. The next factor was low motivation to continue schooling, with 15 cases, while purely economic factors did not emerge as a primary cause in the field findings. This condition indicates that the issue of educational continuation is influenced more strongly by the work culture of agrarian families than by limited access to education or school-related costs. These findings demonstrate that students’ educational decisions are strongly influenced by the family’s social structure and the division of labor within farming households.

This phenomenon can be explained through Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, which posits that families transmit values, habits, and life orientations to their children, including ways of

perceiving formal education [22]. Among farming families in Sidoharjo Village, the cultural capital transmitted to children is more strongly associated with agricultural skills and land management than with long-term educational aspirations. Children who actively assist their parents in the fields are often perceived as responsible and more beneficial to the family than those who continue their education. Consequently, continuing education is not always regarded as an important form of social investment. This theory helps explain why the availability of senior secondary schools, Islamic senior secondary schools (*Madrasah Aliyah*), and even higher education institutions in Sidoharjo Village has not automatically increased the rate of educational continuation among MTs and SMP graduates.

The findings of this study are also consistent with Sajogyo's perspective on the characteristics of agrarian communities, in which the family functions as the primary unit of production, making children's involvement in agricultural activities an integral part of the family's economic socialization process.² Interviews with several parents revealed that sons, in particular, are expected to be capable of managing the family's rice fields or plantations in the future. They argued that practical experience working on agricultural land is more important than pursuing further education that may not necessarily guarantee stable employment. This finding is consistent with previous research on rural communities, which has demonstrated that the work orientation of farming families is often stronger than children's aspirations for formal education. Thus, the low rate of educational continuation is the result of an interaction between agrarian culture, the occupational structure of the family, and pragmatic perceptions of the benefits of education.

Nevertheless, this study also found a shift in perceptions among a small number of parents who have begun to recognize the importance of secondary and higher education due to the increasingly limited availability of agricultural land and the rising cost of living in rural communities. These parents stated that younger generations can no longer rely entirely on farming because the area of productive agricultural land is gradually decreasing as a result of settlement expansion and the division of inherited family land. This finding supports Kusnanto's view that rural social transformation requires changes in the community's educational orientation to enable people to respond to future economic changes and shifts in occupational structures [10]. Therefore, the findings of this sub-theme indicate that school principals' strategies should focus on strengthening educational awareness among agrarian families rather than solely increasing students' motivation. An approach that involves parents as educational partners is considered more effective in improving students' educational continuation within rural agrarian communities.

3.3. Principal Strategies for Managing Students' Educational Continuation

The research findings indicate that the principals of the four educational institutions—MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin, MTs Darul Munajah, SMP Taruna Jaya, and SMP Mafatihussalam—have implemented various strategies to improve students' educational continuation at the senior secondary level (SMA/MA/SMK). These strategies include planning educational continuation socialization programs, identifying students' educational interests, establishing educational guidance teams, strengthening communication with parents, and developing partnerships with secondary schools in and around Sidoharjo Village. The principals recognize that the low rate of educational continuation is not solely an academic issue but is also closely associated with the agrarian culture and employment orientations prevalent within students' families. Therefore, the programs implemented are not limited to Grade IX students but also target parents through parent meetings and educational continuation outreach activities. This approach demonstrates that the management of students' educational continuation is positioned as an integral component of school management that involves both internal and external stakeholders in an integrated manner.

Table 4. Principal Strategies for Managing Students' Educational Continuation

No.	School	Strategies
1	MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin	Socialization of further education opportunities for students and parents; guidance in selecting SMA/MA/SMK; parent meetings each semester; collaboration with MA Hidayatul Mubtadiin and nearby senior secondary schools.

2	MTs Darul Munajah	Career guidance and mapping of students' interests; counseling on the importance of secondary education; motivation to continue education through alumni; individual consultations for students who are hesitant to pursue further education.
3	SMP Taruna Jaya	Home visits; intensive communication with parents; identification of students at risk of dropping out; involvement of community and religious leaders in educational outreach activities.
4	SMP Mafatihussalam	Strengthening students' learning motivation and future orientation; regular mentoring for Grade IX students; collaboration with nearby SMA/MA schools to promote further education opportunities; assistance with the administrative requirements for enrollment in subsequent educational institutions.

Source: Researcher's field data, 2026.

Data in Table 3 indicate that each school has developed different strategies according to the characteristics of its students and the surrounding community. MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin places greater emphasis on socializing opportunities for further education and providing parental guidance, whereas MTs Darul Munajah focuses on career guidance and mapping students' interests. SMP Taruna Jaya has developed a home-visit strategy to reach families whose children are at risk of not continuing their education, while SMP Mafatihussalam prioritizes learning motivation, future orientation, and assistance with the administrative requirements for enrollment in subsequent educational institutions. These differences in strategy demonstrate that school principals seek to adapt their programs to the sociocultural conditions of agrarian communities. Schools that adopt a direct approach to families tend to exert a stronger influence on changes in students' educational decisions.

The strategies identified in this study are consistent with Wahjosumidjo's theory, which states that school principals, as educational leaders, must be able to perform the functions of educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator in an integrated manner.¹ In the context of educational continuation, the most dominant leadership functions are those of leader and motivator, as school principals must be able to influence students and parents to develop a longer-term educational orientation. School principals who actively provide motivation, explain opportunities for secondary education, and establish persuasive communication with parents demonstrate more effective leadership capabilities in managing students' educational transitions. This finding indicates that the success of students' educational continuation is strongly influenced by the quality of school leadership in building social relationships with the community.

The findings also support the concept of school-based management proposed by Epstein, which emphasizes that schools need to empower available resources and establish partnerships with the community to achieve educational objectives effectively [9]. Across the four schools examined in this study, school principals did not rely solely on guidance and counseling teachers but also involved homeroom teachers, school committees, religious leaders, and alumni in providing information about the importance of continuing education. This collaborative approach enables schools to obtain greater social support from the surrounding community. Previous studies on educational continuation in rural areas have also demonstrated that local community involvement can enhance students' educational aspirations, as educational decisions in agrarian communities are often collective in nature and influenced by respected community leaders.

One of the most prominent strategies identified in the study was implemented at SMP Taruna Jaya, namely home visits for students identified as being at risk of not continuing their education. Teachers and the school principal visit students' homes to engage directly with parents regarding their children's educational plans after graduation. This approach is not limited to providing information about SMA/MA/SMK options but also seeks to understand the reasons why families postpone or discontinue their children's education. This strategy is consistent with Epstein's perspective, which emphasizes the importance of partnerships among schools, families, and communities in supporting students' educational success [9]. Through direct communication, schools can establish stronger emotional relationships with parents and reduce misunderstandings regarding the benefits of secondary education.

Overall, the findings in this subsection demonstrate that school principals' strategies for managing students' educational continuation in rural agrarian communities are adaptive, participatory, and based on social partnerships. Schools that succeed in improving educational continuation are not necessarily those with better facilities, but rather those capable of developing families' educational awareness, providing career guidance to students, and maintaining intensive communication with the community. These findings reinforce the view that educational leadership in rural areas requires an approach that differs from that applied in urban settings because it must take into account agrarian culture, family occupational structures, and the social orientation of the local community. Thus, effective school principal strategies in the context of this study can be understood as the ability to integrate school managerial functions with the empowerment of families and agrarian communities to support students' educational continuation

3.4. Factors Inhibiting and Supporting Students' Educational Continuation

The findings of the study indicate that students' educational continuation across the four research schools is influenced by a combination of internal school factors and external factors associated with the agrarian community. Internal factors include the quality of career guidance services, the intensity of communication between schools and parents, the availability of programs supporting students' transition to higher levels of education, and the schools' capacity to foster educational motivation among Grade IX students. Meanwhile, external factors are more closely associated with the work culture of farming families, relatively low educational aspirations among some parents, students' involvement in agricultural activities in rice fields and plantations, and the influence of the social environment, which regards entering the workforce after graduating from MTs or SMP as a reasonable and acceptable option.

The principals of the four schools stated that, although access to secondary education is already available in Sidoharjo Village, students' decisions to continue their education are strongly influenced by family support and the surrounding community environment. This condition demonstrates that the management of students' educational continuation requires an integrated approach involving schools, families, and the wider community.

Table 5. Factors Inhibiting and Supporting Students' Educational Continuation at Each School

No.	School	Inhibiting Factors	Supporting Factors
1	MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin	Some students help their parents with farming activities; influence of peers who do not continue their education.	Socialization regarding further education; support from the principal and teachers; collaboration with MA Hidayatul Mubtadiin.
2	MTs Darul Munajah	Low motivation among some students; lack of family support for secondary education.	Career guidance program; assistance in mapping students' interests; involvement of alumni in providing motivation.
3	SMP Taruna Jaya	Many students are involved in agricultural work in rice fields and plantations; emotional distance between the school and some parents/guardians.	Home visit program; intensive communication with parents; support from religious leaders and community leaders.
4	SMP Mafatihussalam	Low orientation toward long-term education; some students choose to work after graduation.	Learning motivation development; collaboration with nearby SMA/MA schools; assistance with the administrative process for enrollment in further education.

Source: Researcher's field data, 2026.

The data in Table 4 indicate that each school has a different combination of inhibiting and supporting factors, depending on the characteristics of the surrounding community. MTs Hidayatul

Mubtadiin faces the influence of the agrarian family work culture and peers who do not continue their education. However, the school receives strong support through regular socialization programs concerning further education and collaboration with MA Hidayatul Mubtadiin as a continuation school. This condition enables the school to develop students' educational orientation more effectively because there is continuity between the previous and destination schools within the same social environment.

At MTs Darul Munajah, the main obstacles identified were the low motivation of some students and insufficient family support for secondary education. Nevertheless, the school has successfully utilized career guidance programs, student interest mapping, and alumni involvement as key supporting factors. Alumni who have pursued further education or entered the formal employment sector are frequently invited to student motivation activities to provide concrete perspectives on the benefits of continuing education. This finding indicates that the real-life experiences of alumni have a relatively strong influence on developing students' educational aspirations compared with merely providing theoretical information through teachers.

Meanwhile, SMP Taruna Jaya faces more complex challenges because many students are directly involved in agricultural activities in their families' rice fields and plantations, thereby reducing their attention to plans for further education. In addition, several parents or guardians are less active in communicating with the school. To address these conditions, the school has developed strategies involving home visits, intensive communication with parents, and the engagement of religious and community leaders in raising awareness of the importance of secondary education. This approach demonstrates that community-based social support can serve as an important resource for improving students' educational continuation in rural agrarian environments.

At SMP Mafatihussalam, the main challenges are associated with students' limited orientation toward long-term educational goals and the tendency of some students to enter the workforce after graduation. The principal explained that some students are more interested in earning an immediate income than pursuing further education, whose benefits they perceive as uncertain. Nevertheless, the school seeks to address these conditions through learning motivation development, collaboration with nearby SMA/MA schools, and assistance with the administrative procedures for enrollment in further education. This finding indicates that administrative assistance and technical support are also important factors in encouraging students to continue their education, particularly for families with limited understanding of secondary school enrollment procedures.

The findings concerning the inhibiting and supporting factors at each school are consistent with Nanang Fattah's theory, which states that the effectiveness of educational management is influenced by the school's ability to manage the relationship between internal organizational factors and the external community environment [23]. Schools that are able to utilize internal resources, such as teachers, homeroom teachers, and educational guidance programs, while also establishing partnerships with families and local communities, tend to have greater opportunities to improve students' educational continuation. Thus, the successful management of students' educational continuation is determined not only by the quality of school administration but also by the principal's ability to establish social networks that support the educational aspirations of the community.

The most dominant inhibiting factor in Sidoharjo Village is the agrarian work culture within families, while the most effective supporting factors are intensive communication with parents, career guidance, and school partnerships with the community. Therefore, the management of students' educational continuation requires a contextual, participatory, and community-based model, in which schools function not only as formal educational institutions but also as agents of social change that foster educational awareness within rural agrarian communities.

3.5. Implications of the Findings for Educational Management in Rural Agrarian Communities

The findings from the four schools, namely MTs Hidayatul Mubtadiin, MTs Darul Munajah, SMP Taruna Jaya, and SMP Mafatihussalam, indicate that low rates of students' continuation to higher levels of education cannot be understood solely as an individual issue. Rather, they result from the interaction between family agrarian culture, parents' perceptions of education, and school management strategies. The research data demonstrate that schools with intensive communication with parents, structured career guidance programs, and strong partnerships with the community tend

to achieve higher rates of students' educational continuation than schools whose support and mentoring approaches remain limited. This condition indicates that the success of schools in improving students' educational continuation is determined not only by educational facilities or geographical proximity to subsequent educational institutions, but also by the capacity of school principals to establish an educational awareness ecosystem within rural agrarian communities.

Table 6. Student Educational Continuation Management Model in Rural Agrarian Communities

Component	Management Approach	Expected Impact
Planning	The school maps students' interests, identifies students at risk of not continuing their education, and collects data on students' socioeconomic conditions and agrarian family backgrounds from the beginning of Grade IX.	More targeted support programs and improved school capacity to anticipate students who are at risk of discontinuing their education.
Organizing	The principal establishes an educational continuation team involving the vice principal, homeroom teachers, guidance and counseling teachers, the school committee, and representatives of students' parents.	Effective coordination in supporting students and strengthened involvement of all school stakeholders.
Implementation	The school conducts information sessions on further education, career guidance services, learning motivation programs, home visits, parent consultations, and assistance in selecting subsequent educational institutions.	Increased student motivation to continue their education and greater parental awareness of the importance of secondary education.
Partnerships	The school establishes partnerships with senior high schools (SMA), Islamic senior high schools (MA), vocational high schools (SMK), higher education institutions, alumni, religious leaders, community leaders, and village governments to support students' education.	Broader social support, enabling students to obtain better information, motivation, and access to further educational opportunities.
Evaluation and Follow-up	The school conducts graduate tracking (<i>tracer studies</i>), monitors students who have not continued their education, and evaluates the effectiveness of educational continuation programs annually.	Availability of accurate data for program improvement and a sustained increase in the rate of students' educational continuation.

Source: Researcher's field data, 2026.

Table 5 demonstrates that the management of students' educational continuation in rural agrarian communities cannot be addressed through a partial approach, but rather requires a management cycle encompassing planning, organizing, implementation, partnerships, evaluation, and follow-up. Schools that focus solely on educational outreach without conducting risk mapping and systematic follow-up of graduates tend to face difficulties in sustaining students' educational continuation. Conversely, schools that implement systematic management are better able to establish stronger relationships among schools, families, and communities in supporting students' transition to further education. These findings indicate that educational continuation is an integral component of educational management that must be designed and implemented in a sustainable and integrated manner.

These findings are consistent with Mulyasa's theory, which emphasizes that school-based management should integrate the functions of planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision to achieve educational objectives effectively [24]. In the context of this study, educational

continuation cannot be adequately addressed through short-term motivational activities alone; rather, it must become part of the school's strategic programs and be implemented systematically from the beginning of the academic year. School principals need to ensure that all teachers, homeroom teachers, and guidance and counseling teachers have clearly defined roles in supporting students' transition to further education. In this way, the management of educational continuation can be implemented consistently and does not depend on the initiative of particular individuals.

The findings of this study also demonstrate a novel contribution compared with previous research on educational participation in rural areas. Most previous studies have identified economic factors as the primary cause of low educational continuation, whereas this study finds that, in the agrarian community of Sidoharjo Village, more dominant factors include family work culture, a practical orientation toward agricultural employment, and low aspirations for long-term educational attainment. Therefore, the principal contribution of this study is the development of a school–family–community partnership-based model for managing educational continuation that is relevant to rural agrarian communities undergoing changes in their social and economic structures.

Practically, these findings have important implications for school principals and education managers in rural areas. Schools need to develop career guidance programs that are contextualized to the lives and characteristics of agrarian communities, strengthen persuasive communication with parents, and establish stronger networks with senior high schools (SMA), Islamic senior high schools (MA), vocational high schools (SMK), and local community leaders. In addition, local governments and educational institutions need to provide support for educational transition assistance programs from Islamic junior secondary schools (MTs) and junior secondary schools (SMP) to upper secondary education in order to sustainably increase students' educational continuation rates. Thus, the management of students' educational continuation in rural agrarian communities should be understood as a collective effort that integrates school leadership, family empowerment, and local community support to prepare young people to respond to future social and

4. CONCLUSION

Students' educational continuation in rural agrarian communities demonstrates that the issue of pursuing further education cannot be understood solely in terms of the availability of access to schools. Rather, it is closely related to family work culture, parents' educational orientations, and community participation in supporting secondary education. Adaptive, communicative, and collaborative school leadership constitutes a critical element in fostering educational awareness, strengthening student motivation, and developing partnerships among schools, families, and communities to support students' educational continuation after completing Islamic junior secondary school (MTs) and junior secondary school (SMP).

The management of educational continuation requires a community-based educational management approach that integrates planning, organizing, implementation, partnerships, and continuous evaluation. Strengthening families' educational awareness and expanding collaboration among schools, parents, community leaders, and subsequent educational institutions constitute relevant strategies for supporting students' educational continuation amid ongoing social and economic changes in rural communities. Therefore, efforts to improve educational continuation should be positioned as a collective responsibility oriented toward developing rural human resources that are more adaptive, competitive, and prepared to face future challenges..

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