



Reassessing the influence of teacher role models in student purchasing decisions

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ABSTRACT

This study stems from the anomaly of consumer behavior in the pesantren environment, where the exemplary behavior of teachers as a subjective norm is assumed to strongly influence the purchasing decisions of santri, a phenomenon that challenges rational consumer theory. The purpose of this study is to quantitatively test the influence of Subjective Norms (Teacher Exemplarity) on the purchasing decisions of sarong products among santri at Pesantren Al Istiqomah. Using a quantitative approach through a survey, the data were analyzed using simple linear regression techniques. Surprisingly, the statistical analysis results showed no significant influence (Sig. 0.634 > 0.05), with a very low coefficient of determination (R Square) of 0.003. This finding conclusively rejects the research hypothesis, leading to the conclusion that teacher role modeling is not the primary determinant in students' purchasing decisions. The results indicate that within the walls of the boarding school, economic rationality such as considerations of price and product quality is likely to play a far more dominant role than the social impulse to emulate role models.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the dominant paradigm of consumer behavior studies popularized by Kotler and Keller, purchasing decisions are commonly viewed as a rational process supported by considerations of the intrinsic attributes of a product. Variables such as product quality, price, and design have consistently been shown to be significant determinants in shaping consumer purchasing decisions (Della Irona et al., 2022; Hanim et al., 2022; Irvandinata et al., 2024; Sander et al., 2021). Specifically in the sarong product category, the influence of product variety and price has also been identified as a crucial factor considered by consumers (Nurissyarifah & Darmawan, 2025). This market reality is reflected in the Top Brand Index data, where throughout the period from 2020 to 2024, Sarung Atlas consistently demonstrated its dominance as one of the most popular brands at the national level, competing closely with other major brands such as Cap Gajah Duduk and Wadimor.

Normatively, this implies that consumers in various segments, including religious communities, should have a preference for products that have been tested in the market. However, empirical observations of religious communities such as Islamic boarding schools present an anomaly that challenges the assumption of pure rationality. Through a series of informal interviews and preliminary surveys conducted by researchers prior to the main study, an interesting pattern was identified. An initial study at the Al Istiqomah Islamic boarding school identified a phenomenon where the collective preference of the majority of students was for the Wadimor sarong brand,

which, incidentally, does not hold the top position in the national market. What is even more intriguing is that the primary determinant of this preference is not product superiority or marketing strategies, but rather vertical and hierarchical social influence factors: the consistent example set by their central figures, namely the teachers or clerics. This phenomenon suggests that within certain socio-cultural contexts, the logic of purchasing decisions operates not only in the economic realm but also in the symbolic and compliance realms (Widayanti, 2020)

This phenomenon provides a relevant analytical lens for re-examining the propositions of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), particularly in relation to the construct of subjective norms. This is further supported by empirical findings in the halal cosmetics sector, where attitude and subjective norms have been shown to positively influence purchase intention. Moreover, product positioning plays a significant moderating role in strengthening the relationship between attitude and intention (Khalid et al., 2021). Subjective norms are defined as individuals' perceptions of the social pressure they feel to engage in or refrain from engaging in a certain behavior, which often stems from the views of people who are considered important or serve as role models (Rusti et al., 2024; Wulandari & Ratnasari, 2020). This is further supported by recent findings in the halal cosmetics sector, where subjective norms, religious beliefs, and self-identity significantly influence consumer intention to purchase halal products (Sevie, 2020).

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, teachers not only serve as educators but also as role models (*uswah hasanah*) whose behavior, including their consumption choices, normative reference for students (Arifin & Maghfiroh, 2022; Khodijah, 2023). Thus, teachers' exemplary behavior can be operationalized as a specific and highly influential form of subjective norms (Kurniawan et al., 2023; Wulandari & Ratnasari, 2020).

This condition opens up an interesting academic discourse, considering the inconsistency of findings in the literature regarding the significance of the influence of Subjective Norms. Some studies, such as Khalid et al. (2020), confirm the positive role of subjective norms and attitude in predicting purchase intention for halal cosmetics, especially when moderated by product positioning. However, other studies show that subjective norms may not always be significant, depending on the product category or social context (Khalid et al., 2021). On the one hand, several studies consistently show that Subjective Norms have a positive and significant influence on purchase intent, as found in the context of online fashion products (Rusti et al., 2024), halal food (Wulandari & Ratnasari, 2020), and halal cosmetics (Khaulia, 2021).

This situation presents a compelling research gap stemming from two key areas. First, there is a notable inconsistency in the literature regarding the influence of subjective norms; while many studies find a significant effect, others conclude the opposite (Miskal & Anita Priantina, 2024), suggesting that the source and context of the norm are critical yet underexplored variables. Second, while research on sarong purchasing has focused on conventional factors like product variation and price (Nurissyarifah & Darmawan, 2025), the unique socio-religious dynamics that shape consumer behavior within Islamic boarding schools remain largely unquantified. Specifically, no prior study has isolated and measured the influence of a teacher's role model as a distinct, hierarchical form of subjective norm.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by examining the influence of a teacher's exemplary conduct on students' purchasing decisions. In doing so, this research offers two main contributions. Theoretically, it seeks to provide a contextual explanation for the conflicting findings in the Theory of Planned Behavior literature by investigating a specific, hierarchical form of subjective norm. Practically, the findings will offer evidence-based insights for marketers and educational managers, challenging conventional influencer-based strategies and highlighting the true drivers of consumer behavior in the unique pesantren market niche.

Based on the formulation of the problem, the research hypothesis is as follows: H_0 : There is no significant effect of subjective norms (teacher role models) on santri purchasing decisions. H_a : There is a significant effect of subjective norms (teacher role models) on santri purchasing decisions.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was designed using a quantitative approach (Widodo, 2021). This approach was chosen because quantitative research aims to test certain theories by examining the relationships between variables (Rukminingsih et al., 2020). More specifically, quantitative research emphasizes the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between the variables being studied, rather than the process itself (Hardani et al., 2020). This is in line with the research objective of analyzing and proving the hypothesis regarding the extent of the influence of subjective norms on purchasing decisions. Prior to the main quantitative data collection, the researchers conducted a pre-research stage through observation and informal interviews to sharpen the focus and hypotheses of the study.

Within a positivist framework, this study will examine the causal relationship between two main variables (Hardani et al., 2020; Widodo, 2021). Subjective Norms operationalized as Teacher Role Modeling as the independent variable (X), and Purchase Decisions as the dependent variable (Y). The independent variable is the variable that causes or influences, while the dependent variable is the variable that is caused or influenced. To provide a more detailed understanding of these two variables, the following are the operational definitions used in this study:

Table 1. Operational definitions of variables

Variable	Dimension	Theoretical Source
Subjective Norm (X) (Teacher Role Model)	1. Perception of Expectations 2. Influence of Role Models 3. Normative Beliefs	Main Theory: Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) Supporting: (Khaulia, 2021; Wulandari & Ratnasari, 2020)
	1. Choice Stability 2. Purchase Intention 3. Affirmation & Recommendation	Main Theory: Consumer Decision Process (Kotler & Keller, 2016) Supporting: (Irvandinata et al., 2024; Nurissyarifah & Darmawan, 2025)
Purchase Decision (Y)		

Source: Processed by Researchers

Primary data collection for this descriptive study was conducted at the Al-Istiqomah Islamic Boarding School in Cianjur. The population in this study was all active students enrolled at the Al-Istiqomah Islamic Boarding School. The population was defined as all research subjects who had certain characteristics determined by the researcher to be studied and concluded (Hardani et al., 2020).

The sampling technique used is non-probability sampling, which is a technique that does not give equal opportunity to every member of the population to be selected as a sample (Widodo, 2021). A more specific method is purposive sampling, in which sample members are selected specifically based on the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

This method was chosen to ensure that the samples taken met specific relevant criteria, namely students who had been living in the pesantren for at least one year and actively wore sarongs in their daily activities. The minimum one-year residency criterion was established to ensure that respondents had been sufficiently exposed to the culture and role models in the boarding school environment. From the total population, the sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a precision level or margin of error (e) of 5%, resulting in a representative sample size of 67 respondents. The main data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire distributed to selected respondents to measure their perceptions of the variables under study (Hardani et al., 2020; Widodo, 2021). This research questionnaire used a Likert scale to measure the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of respondents. The fundamental principle of the Likert scale is to place an individual's position on a continuum of attitudes toward a particular object, with gradations ranging from very positive to very negative (Widodo, 2021). In this study, a Likert scale with five response options was used: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) (Abdullah et al., 2022).

After all primary data has been collected through the questionnaire instrument, the next step is data analysis to test the research hypothesis. The data analysis technique used is simple linear regression analysis, which aims to measure the magnitude of the influence of the

independent variable (X) on the dependent variable (Y). Before performing the regression test, the data will undergo a series of classical assumption tests to ensure the validity of the model. The entire computational and statistical analysis process in this study will be processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 29.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The respondents in this study consisted of 67 students from the Al-Istiqomah Islamic boarding school, selected using purposive sampling. Based on the demographic data collected, the respondents were predominantly young adults, with the majority aged between 19 and 25 years old. In terms of length of stay, the respondents showed variations in the duration of their residence in the boarding school environment; however, it can be confirmed that the majority had resided there for more than one year. This characteristic aligns with the established research criteria, which aim to select respondents who have been sufficiently exposed to the culture and exemplary figures within the boarding school environment, thereby enabling them to provide relevant perceptions regarding the variables under study.

Validity Test

Validity is the degree of accuracy between the actual data occurring in the research object and the data successfully reported by the researcher (Hardani et al., 2020). In other words, validity is related to the extent to which a measuring instrument is able to accurately measure what should be measured (Widodo, 2021). A good instrument will produce valid data, i.e., data that does not differ between the researcher's report and the actual reality of the research object (Hardani et al., 2020). To ensure the quality of instruments, especially in quantitative research, construct validity testing is required. One way to test this is by correlating the score of each question item with the total score using product moment correlation. A questionnaire item can be considered valid if it has a significant correlation with its total score, which is indicated when the calculated r value is greater than the table r value (calculated $r > \text{table } r$). Conversely, if the calculated r value is less than the table r value (calculated $r < \text{table } r$), then the instrument item is considered invalid and needs to be revised or discarded (Widodo, 2021). This test is generally conducted at a significance level of 5% (0.05).

Table 2. Validity test

Variable	Indicator	r-count	r-table	Description
Variable X	X.1	0.727	0.240	VALID
	X.2	0.848	0.240	VALID
	X.3	0.882	0.240	VALID
	X.4	0.808	0.240	VALID
	X.5	0.505	0.240	VALID
	X.6	0.470	0.240	VALID
Variable Y	Y.1	0.730	0.240	VALID
	Y.2	0.842	0.240	VALID
	Y.3	0.899	0.240	VALID
	Y.4	0.828	0.240	VALID
	Y.5	0.807	0.240	VALID
	Y.6	0.807	0.240	VALID

Source: SPSS Output Data

The table above shows that all questionnaire items, both for Variable X and Variable Y, are Valid. This is proven because the calculated r value for each item is greater than the table r value (0.240). Statistically, this means that each question item has been able to measure the variable to be measured precisely and accurately. Thus, all items are suitable for use in further analysis.

Reliability Test

After the research instrument has been proven valid, the next step is to conduct a reliability test to ensure that the measuring instrument is consistent in measuring what it is supposed to measure. Reliability refers to the extent to which a measuring instrument can consistently produce the same results when measurements are taken repeatedly on subjects under the same conditions. In other words, a respondent's answers to a questionnaire must be stable over time to be considered reliable. Because the instruments in this study use a non-dichotomous scoring system (Likert scale), the technique used to determine reliability is Cronbach's alpha. The internal consistency of a scale can be measured quantitatively through Cronbach's

alpha (α) value, which ranges from 0 to 1. A variable can be considered reliable if the value obtained indicates good consistency. Based on existing standards, the optimal value for Cronbach's Alpha is between 0.7 and 0.9. Therefore, in this study, a variable will be considered reliable if it has a Cronbach's Alpha value > 0.70 .

Table 3. Reliability test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Limit	Description
Variable X	0.798	0.70	RELIABLE
Variable Y	0.911	0.70	RELIABLE

Source: SPSS Output Data

The test results show that both variables have excellent reliability. Variable X has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.798, which is well above 0.70. Variable Y has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.911, indicating a very high level of consistency. In conclusion, both sets of questionnaires are reliable and can be relied upon to produce consistent data when used at different times or with different samples within the same population.

Classic Assumption Test

Normality Test

Table 4. Normality test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			
			Unstandardized Residual
N			67
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean		0
	Std. Deviation		7.09898811
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute		0.089
	Positive		0.089
	Negative		-0.077
Test Statistic			0.089
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) ^c		.200d	

Source: SPSS Output Data

Since the significance value obtained is 0.200, which is greater than 0.05 ($0.200 > 0.05$), it can be concluded that the residual data from the regression model is normally distributed. With the fulfillment of this normality assumption, the regression model used has met one of the important requirements for producing unbiased and accurate estimates.

Linearity Test

Table 5. Linearity test

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total_Y *	Between Groups	(Combined)	1175.241	23	51.097	1.016	0.468
Total_X		Linearity	11.679	1	11.679	0.232	0.632
		Deviation from Linearity	1163.562	22	52.889	1.052	0.43
		Within Groups	2162.55	43	50.292		
	Total		3337.791	66			

Source: SPSS Output Data

The basis for decision making is that if the Sig. Deviation from Linearity value is > 0.05 , then the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is linear. Since the value obtained is 0.430, which is greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the linearity assumption is met. This means that the linear regression model is suitable for use in analyzing the relationship between Variable X and Variable Y.

Uji Heteroskedastisitas

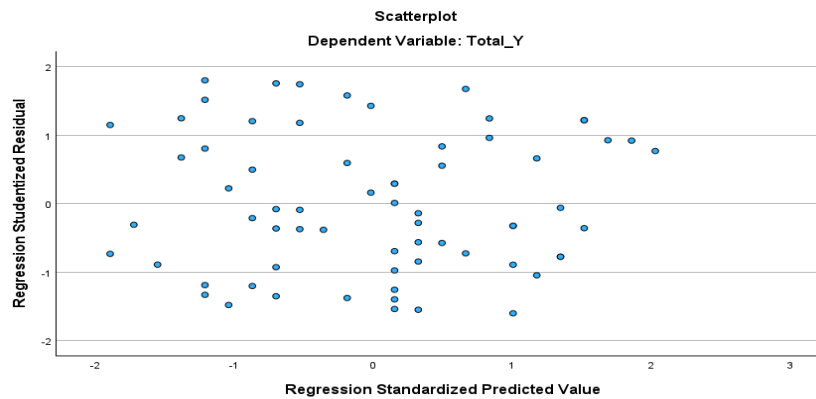


Figure 1. Uji heteroskedastisitas

Since the data distribution in the scatterplot does not form a specific pattern, it can be concluded that there is no heteroscedasticity in the regression model. This assumption has been fulfilled, which means that the regression model is valid for use.

Testing the Coefficient of Determination

Tabel 6. Testing the coefficient of determination

Model	R	R Square	Model Summary ^b	
			Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.059 ^a	0.003	-0.012	7.15339

a. Predictors: (Constant), Total_X

b. Dependent Variable: Total_Y

A value of 0.003 for R Square means that Variable X's ability to explain or influence Variable Y is only 0.3%. The remaining 99.7% is influenced by other variables not examined in this model. This shows that Variable X's contribution to Variable Y is very low.

Uji T

Tabel 7. Uji t

Model	Coefficients ^a				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1 (Constant)	18.222	2.971		6.133	<.001
Total_X	-0.072	0.15	-0.059	-0.478	0.634

a. Dependent Variable: Total_Y

Source: SPSS Output Data

From the "Coefficients" table, we see in the Total_X row: The t-value is -0.478. The Sig. value is 0.634. The basis for decision making is to compare the significance value with 0.05. If the Sig. value is < 0.05, then H₀ is rejected, meaning that variable X has a significant effect on Y. If the Sig. value is > 0.05, then H₀ is accepted, meaning that variable X does not have a significant effect on Y. Since the Sig. value (0.634) is > 0.05, then H₀ is accepted. The main conclusion is: Variable X does not have a statistically significant effect on Variable Y. Although there is a negative relationship (as indicated by the coefficient -0.072), the relationship is very weak and therefore considered insignificant in a statistical context. Although the instruments are valid and reliable, and all classical assumptions (normality, linearity, homoscedasticity) are met, the results of the hypothesis test indicate that the theory testing that X influences Y is not proven in this research sample.

Discussions

Based on simple linear regression analysis, conclusive statistical results were obtained. Hypothesis testing showed a significance value of 0.634 (> 0.05) with a coefficient of determination

(R Square) of 0.003. In accordance with testing principles, H_0 is accepted, which statistically confirms that the subjective norm variable (teacher role modeling) does not have a significant influence on the purchasing decisions of students at Al Istiqomah Islamic Boarding School. This finding indicates that teacher role modeling can only explain 0.3% of the variation in purchase decisions, while the remaining 99.7% is influenced by factors outside the model.

The main finding that teacher role modeling does not have a significant effect is surprising, rejects the research hypothesis, and opens up discussion about the complexity of consumer behavior in Islamic boarding schools. This finding enriches the academic discourse on the inconsistency of the influence of subjective norms. On one hand, this finding contradicts several studies that found significant influence (Khaulia, 2021; Rusti et al., 2024; Wulandari & Ratnasari, 2020). However, on the other hand, these results align with other research groups that also found insignificant influence (Hasan & Suciarto, 2020; Heptariza, 2020; Miskal & Anita Priantina, 2024). The presence of consistent findings in terms of non-significance indicates that the influence of social norms cannot be generalized and is highly dependent on context and other more dominant variables.

The failure of subjective norms to predict purchasing decisions in this context sparks several explanatory hypotheses rooted at the intersection of social theory and economic rationality. First, the dominance of rational factors is a compelling explanation. Santri, as consumers with potentially limited financial resources, may inevitably prioritize fundamental attributes such as affordable prices and product durability for long-term use (Rahmattullah, 2021). In this scenario, practical economic calculations simply outweigh the social drive for imitation (Umarova, 2020), a reality supported by numerous studies confirming the power of price and quality in shaping purchasing decisions (Irvandinata et al., 2024; Nurissyarifah & Darmawan, 2025; Sihombing et al., 2023). Second, a more nuanced social-psychological interpretation distinguishes between the internalization of values and the mere imitation of behavior. It is plausible that santri internalize the values exemplified by their teachers such as simplicity or modesty rather than feeling obligated to imitate specific brand choices. The exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*) they follow is the principle, not the product, thus decoupling the teacher's brand from the student's final purchase decision. Third, the theory of planned behavior itself offers an alternative explanation through the lens of Perceived Behavioral Control. The intention to emulate a teacher's choice cannot translate into a purchase if the product is not readily available or competitively priced within the pesantren's immediate economic ecosystem. These three interpretations collectively portray the santri as a hybrid consumer: an individual who respects social hierarchies but ultimately acts as a pragmatic economic agent within the constraints of their environment.

Implicitly, these findings reinforce the theoretical notion that subjective norms are contextual and not monolithic. Practically, for marketers, influencer - based strategies even with highly respected figures will not be effective if they overlook fundamental pillars such as price, quality, and distribution ease for the target consumers.

The researchers acknowledge that this study has limitations. First, this study is case study in one Islamic boarding school, so the findings need to be generalized with caution. Second, the simple linear regression analysis model used, as indicated by the very low R Square value (0.003), indicates that many other factors outside this model have the potential to be the main determinants of santri purchasing decisions. These limitations serve as the foundation for recommendations for future more comprehensive research.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that a teacher's exemplary conduct, as a specific form of subjective norm, does not have a statistically significant influence on the purchasing decisions of sarong among students at Al Istiqomah Islamic Boarding School. The finding suggests that despite the high reverence for teachers, students operate as rational economic actors whose choices are governed by factors more complex than simple social imitation, such as personal needs and economic calculations.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the Theory of Planned Behavior by highlighting the contextual nature of subjective norms, suggesting that their predictive power weakens when

competing with strong rational considerations. Practically, the findings serve as a critical reminder for marketers that even within highly communal environments, fundamental pillars such as price, quality, and product accessibility remain the primary drivers of consumer decisions, cautioning against over-reliance on influencer-based strategies.

Given these findings, three avenues for future research are recommended. First, a qualitative study employing in-depth interviews is needed to explore the nuanced meaning of "role modeling" from the students' perspective. Second, subsequent quantitative research should utilize a multivariate model incorporating other potentially dominant variables, such as price perception, product quality, and perceived behavioral control, to better explain consumer behavior. Finally, comparative studies across various types of Islamic boarding schools are necessary to test the generalizability of these findings and to paint a more comprehensive portrait of this unique consumer segment.

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