

Inclusion That Excludes: Eligibility Rules, Donor Dependence, and Gendered Schooling for Disadvantaged Girls in West Sumatra, Indonesia

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Abstract

Economically disadvantaged girls in Indonesia often depend on faith-based residential institutions that provide schooling, care, and skills training together. Such institutions are widely regarded as inclusive responses to disadvantage, yet the rules by which they allocate support can also be exclusionary. This article asks how one foundation's eligibility rules and resources both enable and constrain girls' continuation in education in West Sumatra, and how students and staff navigate these rules and resources. The study used a qualitative case design, drawing on participant observation, documentary records, and a traceable corpus of interviews with one administrator, four students, and seven alumni, and applied Giddens's duality of structure as an analytic framework. Three findings emerged. A state-set age ceiling on assistance coincided with the move from senior secondary school to higher education and, together with contracting donor funding, meant that the same rules enabled some students and excluded others. Students' occupational aspirations toward medicine, health work, and enterprise predated enrollment and did not align with the gender-typed skills the foundation offered. That gender-coded provision narrowed the choices students could act on. The study specifies a boundary condition for structuration in the analysis of intra-institutional exclusion, showing how an inclusion-oriented institution can reproduce exclusion within its own walls. It makes no causal claim about social or economic mobility; it aims at analytical rather than statistical generalization.

Keywords: Islamic education; residential care; educational aspirations; gendered skills training; intra-institutional exclusion

Introduction

For families in poverty, the barriers to staying in school reach well beyond tuition. Housing, food, transport, learning support, and continuity of care all shape whether a child finishes secondary school and goes on to further education. In West Sumatra, Indonesia, Statistics Indonesia (BPS) counted 315,430 people, 5.42 percent of the provincial population, below the poverty line in September 2024.¹ That figure provides context for material vulnerability. It does not measure school dropout, and it does not show that children from low-income households meet the same barriers. Educational participation and continuity come from a separate source, the provincial education statistics.² This study keeps the two apart on purpose: poverty as a structural context, schooling continuity as an empirical question examined through institutional records and participants' accounts. This separation guards against treating economic hardship and educational outcomes as the same.

One response to this vulnerability is the faith-based residential foundation, which brings Islamic schooling, a children's home, boarding, religious guidance, and practical skills activities under one organization. These institutions are commonly seen as inclusive: they take in children whom families or the state cannot fully support.³ Their support still runs on rules, including eligibility criteria, finite resources, and reliance on outside donors, and those rules can exclude at the moment they are meant to include. This article, therefore, asks how the rules and resources that enable schooling also generate exclusion at particular points, and how students and staff work within them. It does not ask whether the foundation produces upward mobility: the data cannot establish that outcome, and educational expansion does not guarantee it.⁴

Three strands of scholarship inform this focus. Work on Islamic philanthropy and

¹ Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Sumatera Barat, "Profil Kemiskinan Provinsi Sumatera Barat September 2024" (BPS Provinsi Sumatera Barat, 2025), <https://sumbar.bps.go.id/id/pressrelease/2025/01/15/1330/profil-kemiskinan-provinsi-sumatera-barat-september-2024.html>.

² Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Sumatera Barat, "Profil Statistik Pendidikan Provinsi Sumatera Barat 2024" (BPS Provinsi Sumatera Barat, 2025), <https://sumbar.bps.go.id/id/publication/2025/03/21/2b81ff6e41a3af0ab7c09c71/profil-statistik-pendidikan-provinsi-sumatera-barat-2024.html>.

³ Ainur Sadyrova and Zhomart Simtikov, "Socialisation and Experience of Living in Orphanages during Childhood," *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy* 19, no. 1 (2025): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-025-00142-5>.

⁴ Phillip Brown and David James, "Educational Expansion, Poverty Reduction and Social Mobility: Reframing the Debate," *International Journal of Educational Research* 100 (2020): 101537, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101537>.

educational financing shows that faith-based giving widens access for orphaned and low-income children. Yet it focuses more on providing support than on how recipients use it or are governed by it.⁵ Research on integrated academic and non-academic support makes a similar case: access matters alongside the continuity of guidance, although claims about outcomes require longitudinal evidence.⁶ A second strand separates access from outcomes in Islamic education and gender. Indonesian madrasahs enroll more children from poor, rural, and less-educated households, and girls attend them more than boys do; ethnographic work shows girls negotiating aspirations within religiously framed schooling, and parents weighing moral, economic, and gendered reasons for choosing them.⁷ A third strand concerns educational aspirations. Disadvantaged young people, and girls in particular, often hold high aspirations that structural conditions then constrain. Aspirations can hold steady as a form of moral agency amid marginalization, diverge from lived realities in low-income settings, and fall out of line with the pathways actually open. They can also reproduce inequality rather than dissolve it, even though the educational dimensions of agency predict attainment once family background is accounted for.⁸ In Indonesia, gendered and religious expectations shape young women's aspirations.⁹

Two further bodies of work bear on the mechanism studied here. Research on eligibility and conditionality shows that the rules governing assistance exclude those outside their thresholds, the missing middle whose need goes unrecognized. Conditional support, moreover, yields limited benefits that lapse when the conditions or funding

⁵ Siti Junita, Moh. Dasuki, and Zainuddin Al-Haj, "Strategic Utilization of Islamic Philanthropy in Education Financing: An Investigation into Orphan Empowerment," *MANAGERIA: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 1 (2023): 39–58, <https://doi.org/10.14421/manageria.81-03>.

⁶ Rodney J Andrews, Scott A Imberman, and Michael F Lovenheim, "Recruiting and Supporting Low-Income, High-Achieving Students at Flagship Universities," *Economics of Education Review* 74 (2020): 101923, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2019.101923>.

⁷ Hem Borker, "Aspiring Inside a Girls Madrasa: Gender, Negotiation and Change," *Sociological Bulletin* 72, no. 4 (2023): 476–89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380229231196731>; Lyn Parker, "Intersections of Gender/Sex, Multiculturalism and Religion: Young Muslim Minority Women in Contemporary Bali," *Asian Studies Review* 41, no. 3 (2017): 441–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2017.1332004>; Mahmood Nathie and Mohamad Abdalla, "Courses Preferences and Occupational Aspirations of Students in Australian Islamic Schools," *Religions* 11, no. 12 (2020): 663, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11120663>.

⁸ Ingrid Schoon and Rose Cook, "Can Individual Agency Compensate for Background Disadvantage? Predicting Tertiary Educational Attainment among Males and Females," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 50, no. 3 (2021): 408–22, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01290-2>.

⁹ Suzanne Naafs, "Youth, Gender, and the Workplace: Shifting Opportunities and Aspirations in an Indonesian Industrial Town," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 646, no. 1 (2013): 233–50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716212469927>.

change.¹⁰ Policies built for radical inclusion can still reproduce exclusion when staff implement them,¹¹ and faith-based girls' education sits within donor relations and gendered governance.¹² Research on gendered vocational development adds that the skills made available to girls steer them toward gender-typical fields and narrow the options they can act on, whatever their stated preferences.¹³ Read together, these strands point to one possibility: the decisive feature of an inclusive institution lies in where its rules draw boundaries and how its provision is gendered, more than in what it provides.

Giddens's theory of structuration gives this possibility a vocabulary. Structure, in this account, consists of rules and resources that action draws on and reproduces. The allocative resources here include fee waivers, housing, food, and financing; the authoritative resources include the organization of care and the authority to determine eligibility for assistance.¹⁴ The theory's central claim is the duality of structure: a single rule can both enable and constrain. An age ceiling on state assistance supports those below it and excludes those above it, a duality rather than a straight line from assistance to improved status. Routine practices such as the daily order of worship, cleaning, and shared responsibility rest on practical consciousness, the tacit knowledge of how to go on, and in being repeated, they reproduce institutional authority. At the same time, agents' knowledge allows staff and students to work within the rules without changing them. Studies that apply structuration to the education of vulnerable groups set a precedent, showing that institutional rules and actors' needs do not always align; within Indonesian scholarship, the agent–structure lens has been used to analyze communication in higher

¹⁰ Diana Contreras Suarez and Lisa Cameron, “Conditional Cash Transfers: Do They Result in More Patient Choices and Increased Educational Aspirations?,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 68, no. 3 (2020): 729–61, <https://doi.org/10.1086/701829>; Alejandro Montoya Castaño and Mary Arends-Kuenning, “How Does a Rural Poverty Alleviation Program Affect Parents’ Aspirations about Their Children? Evidence from BRAC-TUP in Bangladesh,” *Journal of Development Studies* 62, no. 8 (2026): 1356–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2025.2607412>.

¹¹ Augustus Osborne et al., “Navigating Exclusion: School Responses to the Radical Inclusion Policy for Marginalized Students in Sierra Leone,” *Discover Education* 4, no. 1 (2025): 67, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-025-00452-3>.

¹² Javed Anwar, Peter Kelly, and Emily Gray, “Girls’ Education in Balochistan, Pakistan: Exploring a Postcolonial Islamic Governmentality,” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 43, no. 3 (2022): 433–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2022.2035679>.

¹³ Katie M Lawson et al., “Correlates of Gendered Vocational Development from Middle Childhood to Young Adulthood,” *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 107 (2018): 209–21, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2018.05.002>; Garima Sahai, “Do Job Aspirations Cause Job Choice? Insights from Women Entering Male-Dominated Occupational Training in India,” *Development Policy Review* 42, no. 2 (2024): e12740, <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12740>.

¹⁴ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984).

education in a different setting.¹⁵

Structuration also has critics. Archer argues that it conflates structure and agency, what he calls central conflation, which obscures how the two interact over time.¹⁶ This analysis takes that critique on by methodically bracketing the two, in Giddens's own sense, and borrowing Archer's analytical dualism as a heuristic: it holds structure (state eligibility rules, donor flows) apart from agency (students' and staff's navigation). It identifies where the two meet, rather than treating them as mutually constitutive at every point.

Structuration has explained educational access, but it has done far less to explain how an inclusion-oriented institution reproduces exclusion within its own walls when state eligibility rules, donor-contracted support, and gendered provision converge. One alternative explanation deserves a place at the outset. The study site is situated within Minangkabau society, whose matrilineal organization and longstanding accommodation between adat (custom) and Islam shape family and gender relations in West Sumatra.¹⁷ Regional norms of this kind, including the Minangkabau tradition of merantau (outmigration), operate well beyond any single institution, so any continuation among girls may reflect these norms rather than the foundation.

For that reason, the article makes no claim that the foundation causes educational or economic outcomes; it examines the rules-and-navigation mechanism. It asks two questions. (RQ1) How do the foundation's eligibility rules and resource arrangements both enable and constrain the educational continuation of economically disadvantaged girls? (RQ2) How do students and staff work within these rules and the foundation's gender-coded skills provision in relation to their educational aspirations? The contribution is to show, through interviews and documentary evidence, how eligibility thresholds and donor dependence enable and exclude at once, and how gendered skills provision narrows the choices students can act on, thereby marking a boundary condition for structuration in the analysis of intra-institutional exclusion.

¹⁵ Surti Wardani, Alo Liliweri, and Ridzki Rinanto Sigit, "Agent and Structure Relations in the Communication Process Based on Humanist and Religious Values at the Pamulang University in South Tangerang," *International Journal of Social Science* 3, no. 6 (2024): 699–708, <https://doi.org/10.53625/ijss.v3i6.7634>.

¹⁶ Margaret S Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511557675>.

¹⁷ Aleena Sebastian, "Matrilineal Practices among Muslims: An Ethnographic Study of the Minangkabau of West Sumatra," *Ethnography* 27, no. 1 (2026): 155–76, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14661381221147137>.

Research Methods

This article reports a qualitative case study of a faith-based residential foundation in Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia, that brings together Islamic schooling, a children's home, boarding, religious guidance, and practical skills activities. The report withholds the institution's name and street-level location and, where necessary, provides cohort years as ranges to protect a small, identifiable group of minors. In line with the research questions, the unit of analysis is the relationship between the foundation's eligibility rules and resource arrangements and students' educational action and navigation, rather than the measurement of educational or economic outcomes. A single-case design fits the aim, which is analytical generalization to theory rather than statistical generalization to a population.¹⁸ The case clarifies the conditions under which an inclusion-oriented institution reproduces exclusion. Thick description of the setting and its rules supports transferability in Lincoln and Guba's sense,¹⁹ enabling readers to judge how far the findings apply to comparable settings.

Fieldwork for the underlying study ran mainly between April and June 2026. The four student interviews took place on 27 March 2026 during a single field visit; these interviews are reported separately from the main fieldwork period, and their inclusion in the analysis is subject to the ethical considerations and consent procedures described in the Ethical Statement.

The study drew on participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Documentary sources comprised the 2026 residential-care register, a graduate-count table, an alumni destination summary, a research-permission letter from the university dated 31 March 2026, and a research-completion letter from the foundation dated 19 June 2026. Administrative permission is distinct from ethics approval and participant consent, which are addressed separately in the Ethical Statement.

The study selected participants purposively to reach the administrator responsible for support, current students, and alumni. The traceable corpus holds 12 informants (Table 1); this figure refers to the interviews analyzed here and does not imply that the underlying study involved only 12 people. The underlying study's informant design also included teachers, dorm supervisors, and parents or guardians, but this article excludes

¹⁸ Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018).

¹⁹ Yvonna Lincoln and Egon G Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage publications, 1985).

them because their interview records could not be traced with sufficient documentation; the resulting reliance on a single institutional voice is a limitation. The four students are not a statistical sample of the 34 children in the register; their selection reflects variation in family economic circumstances, care experiences, and aspirations.

Table 1.
Traceable interview corpus

Group/code	Number	Interview period	Data contribution
Administrator P1	1	June 2026	Financing, care, and eligibility constraints
Students S1–S4	4	March 2026 (single field visit)	Experiences and educational aspirations
Alumni A1–A7	7	May 2026	Boarding and skills experiences

The first author had worked as a sociology teacher at the school. This insider position eased access and provided insight into daily routines, and it may also have shaped how candidly participants spoke and the accounts they provided. To limit that effect, the analysis treated the administrator's accounts as institutional claims, kept them apart from students' and alumni accounts, and checked them against documents; descriptive and reflexive field notes ran throughout.

Analysis followed the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.²⁰ The study organized the material around four foci tied to the research questions: eligibility rules and resources; boarding routines and skills provision; students' aspirations and navigation; and documented alumni destinations, which were treated as context rather than an outcome measure. Coding was concept-driven and linked informants' statements and documents to Giddens's categories of rules, resources, and agency. Table 2 gives the coding scheme. The first author coded and interpreted the data; the study claims no second coder or intercoder reliability, which is a limitation.

Credibility rested on triangulation across sources, techniques, and time: accounts from the administrator, students, and alumni were compared with one another; interview statements were read against observation and documents; and data were revisited across different institutional activities. In practice, accounts of assistance were read against the register, descriptions of rules and skills against alumni accounts, and narratives of continuity against the alumni destination summary. These checks do not verify every

²⁰ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (Washington: SAGE Publications, 2014).

institutional statement. The administrator's reports of age-related restrictions and declining donors serve to qualify the support narrative rather than confirm it; one alumna's unknown destination counts as missing data, not a negative case.

Table 2.
Concept-driven coding framework (after Giddens)

Analytical category	What it captures	Primary data source	Theme
Collective agent	Institutional decisions and actions of the foundation	administrator, documents	A
Individual agent	Students' choices, participation, responses, and aspirations	students, alumni	B
Rules and resources	Admission and subsidy policy, eligibility instruments (SKTM, a certificate of low-income status; DTSEN, the national socioeconomic registry), school and dorm rules; allocative and authoritative resources	documents, administrator	A, C
Signification	Meaning of education as a way to change one's circumstances and to serve this world and the hereafter	students, administrator	B
Domination	Control and distribution of allocative and authoritative resources	administrator, documents	A
Legitimation	Norms, obligations, and sanctions governing school and dorm life	documents, observation	A
Duality of structure	The same rules enabling and constraining; reflexive navigation	all sources	A, B, C
Change in opportunity position	Continuation, courses, and work (treated as context, not an outcome measure)	alumni records	Limitations

Note: Theme A = Eligibility rules and resources; B = Aspirations and navigation; C = Gender-coded provision'

Findings

Eligibility Rules Are Enabling and Excluding at Once (RQ1)

The foundation ties formal schooling to everyday care. Its administrator described this dual purpose:

"The aim is to guide children for this world and the hereafter. For this world, they follow the education department's curriculum; for the hereafter, they receive guidance through the pesantren curriculum." (P1, June 2026)

The statement treats schooling, boarding, and religious guidance as one service. That service runs on what Giddens calls *allocative resources* (fee waivers, housing, food, and boarding) and on *authoritative resources* (the scheduling of care, the allocation of responsibilities, and the authority to decide who is eligible for assistance). The 2026 register lists the grounds on which 34 children, all recorded as female, entered care (Table

3). Each child is recorded under a single primary reason, although the circumstances behind these reasons overlap (a child recorded as poor may also have lost a parent). Hence, the table records reasons for admission rather than the prevalence of distinct family statuses.

Table 3.
Recorded admission reasons, 2026 residential-care register (n = 34)

Recorded reason	Number
Poor/unable to afford costs	28
Orphaned, one parent deceased (<i>yatim/piatu</i>)	5
Father deceased (<i>yatim</i>)	1
Total	34

These resources allow children whose families cannot cover the full costs to stay in school. The same rules also exclude. The administrator was clear about where the line falls:

"The difficulty is that many poor students are already over seventeen, so they cannot receive assistance from the social affairs department. Donors are also becoming fewer." (P1, June 2026)

Two exclusion mechanisms appear. First, the administrator reported that assistance from the social affairs department is unavailable to students over seventeen; because many students reach this age during or at the end of senior secondary school, the rule bites near the transition to higher education. The rule both enables and constrains; it supports younger children and cuts off support at the point where the foundation's mission most needs it. Second, reliance on donors makes provision unstable, so support reaches fewer students as donor participation shrinks, regardless of need. The duality of structure is concrete here: one rule opens a path for some children and closes it for others at a fixed threshold. Daily life reproduces the authoritative side of this structure. Alumni described a dense routine of worship, dress, cleanliness, and shared tasks:

"In the boarding house, we had to be tidy and disciplined. There were rules for everything, from clothing and rooms to daily activities." (A6, May 2026)

"We did all the cleaning of toilets, mopping, and sweeping. It was difficult at first, but through that we learned to take responsibility for our own surroundings." (A7, May 2026)

Routines of this kind rest on *practical consciousness*: through habit, residents reproduce the institution's authority, and some carry its dispositions onward, since "those habits even carried over into university," as one alumna said (A5, May 2026). The accounts show how authority is enacted and internalized; they do not measure character

before and after.

Aspirations That Precede the Institution and Miss the Skills on Offer (RQ2)

Students did not arrive as passive recipients. Several described aspirations and decisions formed before or at enrollment:

"I chose to enter this school myself, especially because my family had no income at the time. I hoped that by studying here I could improve my family's life." (S1, March 2026)

"I entered the foundation because I wanted to go to university. I hope to become a health professional or an entrepreneur. I want a good job so I can help my mother." (S3, March 2026)

Agency precedes the provision here: the choice to enroll and the goals behind it were the students' own. Others named specific professional and religious goals:

"Because my family's finances became hard after my father fell ill, I was determined to enter here so I could realize my aspiration to become a doctor." (S2, March 2026)

"My aims in entering [the foundation] were to memorize more of the Qur'an, improve my circumstances, and make the people who had cared for me happy." (S4, March 2026)

These aspirations in medicine, health work, enterprise, higher education, and religious attainment set a benchmark for reading the foundation's skills provision. An alumna described those activities:

"The life skills taught at school included weaving and knitting, and we were also taught to sew damaged clothing." (A6, May 2026)

The mismatch is evident in the provision as A6 describes it. None of the skills on offer (weaving, knitting, and sewing) connects to the occupations the students named; S4's religious aim, by contrast, aligns with the pesantren curriculum, so the mismatch concerns occupational aspirations rather than all aims. This says nothing about outcomes, which the data cannot address; it is a finding about the structure of provision. Students can work within the available support and keep their goals. Yet the knowledgeability of agents has limits: neither students nor the administrator can change the state eligibility rule or the content of the skills curriculum. The foundation keeps students in school while offering a repertoire of skills that do not lead toward the occupations they name.

Gender-Coded Provision and A Narrower Set of Choices (RQ2)

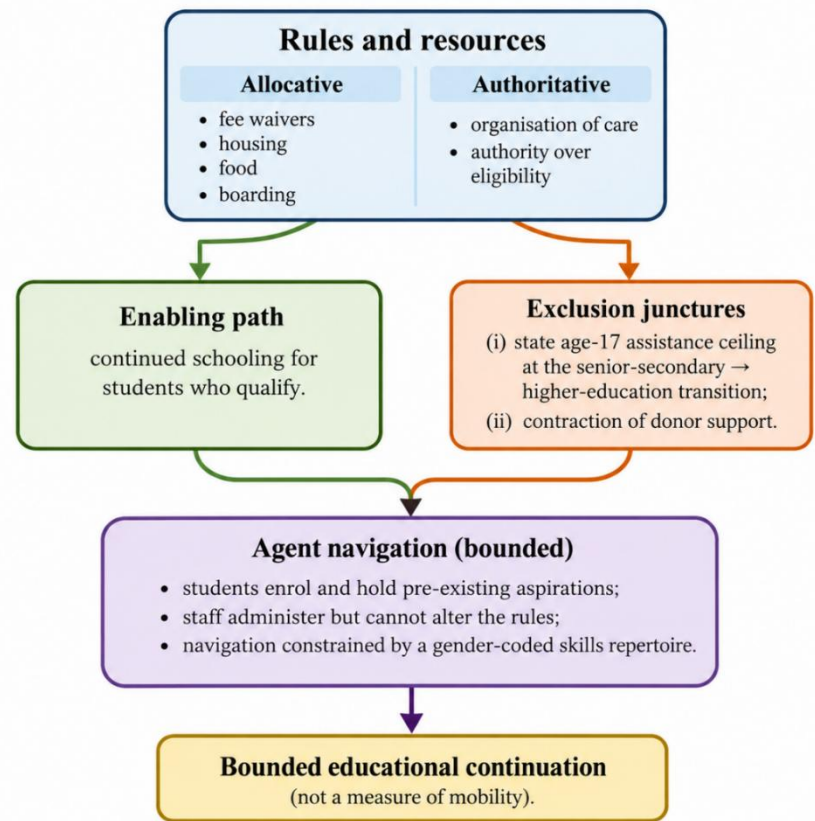
The skills repertoire is not gender-neutral. Given that the register records every child as female, the activities on offer (weaving, knitting, and mending clothes) are the ones long coded as women's domestic work. Whatever a student aspires to, the skills the

institution provides steer the options she can act on toward a narrow, gender-typed set. Provision does not need to impose a choice to constrain one: by offering only domestic skills alongside general schooling, it limits those options, especially for those who aim at medicine, health work, or enterprise.

Summary of the Mechanism

Figure 1 draws the mechanism that ties the findings together. Eligibility rules and resources open an enabling path for those who qualify and produce exclusion at two points: the age-seventeen ceiling near the move to higher education and the contraction of donor support. Within these limits, students act on aspirations they already hold, constrained by a gender-typed skills repertoire.

Figure 1.
Eligibility rules and resources as simultaneously enabling and excluding: a mechanism model of intra-institutional exclusion.



Discussion

The Contribution: Inclusion That Reproduces Exclusion

This study's central contribution is to show that an institution built for inclusion can reproduce exclusion through the rules and resources that sustain it. What matters is where those rules draw their boundaries. A state age ceiling on assistance meets the move to

higher education; the eligibility instruments that gate support determine who can apply; and reliance on shrinking donor funding narrows the reach of support, whatever the need. It reframes how faith-based residential support is read: as a structure whose thresholds determine who continues and who does not, rather than as a ladder out of disadvantage.

Structuration As an Analyzable Mechanism: The Three Dimensions and the Duality of Structure

Giddens's structuration does more analytical work here than the label "structure and agency" suggests, and reading it through its three dimensions makes the mechanism precise. Along the dimension of *signification*, education carries a shared meaning as a means of changing one's circumstances and serving both worldly and religious ends. Students act on that meaning when they choose to enroll and hold to their goals. Along the dimension of *domination*, the foundation controls and distributes allocative resources (fee waivers, housing, food, school operational funds, donor contributions, and facilities) and authoritative resources (the scheduling of care and the authority to decide who is eligible). Along the dimension of *legitimation*, a dense order of norms, obligations, and sanctions governs dress, worship, chores, and conduct, and daily routine reproduces that order through practical consciousness.

The same structure is therefore both enabling and constraining, which is the duality Giddens describes. The foundation draws on its rules and resources to run schooling, subsidies, care, and skills training, while students draw on the same rules and resources to study, build discipline, and plan their futures. Power is asymmetric, yet asymmetry does not remove agency: through reflexive participation, compliance, and educational choice, students help reproduce the institution, and the dialectic of control leaves room for them to adapt within it.

This reading answers a standing objection. As noted, Archer charges structuration with central conflation.²¹ The present analysis holds the two apart. The eligibility rule and the donor flows are structural conditions that neither students nor the administrator can change; navigation (the choice to enroll, the aspirations held in advance, the daily routine) is an exercise of agency within those conditions. Their meeting point can be located at age seventeen, near the higher-education transition, where a structural threshold meets a student's project and closes it. The study, therefore, marks a boundary condition for

²¹ Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach*.

structuration: where the constraining rule is imported from state policy, as in intra-institutional exclusion, where an inclusive institution's rules, a state eligibility regime, and gendered provision converge on the same people, agents' knowledgeability allows navigation but not transformation of the rule. This extends earlier applications of structuration to the education of vulnerable groups, where institutional rules and actors' needs fail to line up;²² the present case locates the misalignment in a threshold imported from state policy that the institution cannot override.

Eligibility, Targeting, And the Limits of Support

Read against the wider evidence, the support the foundation provides fits what the literature predicts, and so does its failure. Grant aid has its most consistent effect on access, retention, persistence, and completion rather than on achievement,²³ and its compensatory effect is strongest for disadvantaged, female, and rural students,²⁴ which is the population the foundation serves. Support of this kind also works best when it is well-targeted and paired with non-financial provisions such as housing, food, mentoring, and welfare services,²⁵ a combination that the foundation's boarding and care arrangements approximate. On the enabling side, then, the case is consistent with the evidence: integrated allocative and authoritative resources keep disadvantaged girls in school.

The exclusion runs through the same machinery. Cross-subsidy and social assistance expand access only when targeting, transparency, and fair distribution hold;²⁶ where eligibility turns on instruments such as a poverty certificate (SKTM) and a social welfare registry (DTSEN), the instruments themselves determine who is reached. Complex, tiered benefit systems exclude genuinely needy recipients as a matter of

²² Beatrice Akua-Sakyiwah, "Intersecting Social Structures and Human Actors: Ganfoso Refugees' Settling Experiences and Impact on Children's Education," *Comparative Migration Studies* 8, no. 1 (2020): 43, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-020-00202-4>.

²³ Robin R LaSota et al., "Does Aid Matter? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Grant Aid on College Student Outcomes," *Review of Educational Research* 95 (2025): 464–504, <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543241239955>.

²⁴ Y Zheng, Y Zheng, and X Liu, "How Education Subsidies Affect Junior High School Students' Noncognitive Ability Development: Evidence from China," *Education Sciences* 15, no. 3 (2025): 298, <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15030298>.

²⁵ Miriam Mutevere et al., "Empowering Underprivileged Students beyond Financial Aid: Insights from a Scholarship Program's Monitoring and Evaluation," *Evaluation and Program Planning* 105 (2024): 102448, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2024.102448>.

²⁶ Adrián Zancajo, Antoni Verger, and Clara Fontdevila, "The Instrumentation of Public Subsidies for Private Schools: Different Regulatory Models with Concurrent Equity Implications," *European Educational Research Journal* 21, no. 1 (2022): 44–70, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14749041211023339>.

course,²⁷ and the foundation's case shows the sharpest form of this: a state age ceiling withdraws assistance from students over seventeen, near the move to higher education. The "missing middle" that financial-aid thresholds leave unsupported here has an age rather than an income boundary, and it falls at the worst point for continuation.²⁸ The instability compounds the threshold, because the benefits of conditional support lapse when conditions or funding change,²⁹ and the administrator's account of contracting donors places that instability in the institution's own resource base. Policies built for radical inclusion can reproduce exclusion in practice,³⁰ and faith-based girls' education, in particular, sits within donor relations and gendered governance; shifts in external funding change who the foundation can support. In short, the line drawn by eligibility rules and funding matters more than the provision's content.

Aspirations As Structural, Not Individual

The second finding, that students arrived with already formed aspirations that the skills provision did not serve, calls into question a common assumption. Low-income women hold firm to their degree aspirations as a form of moral agency amid marginalization,³¹ and poor adolescent girls hold high aspirations that their surroundings then constrain.³² These students fit the pattern: their aims in medicine, health work, and enterprise were theirs before enrollment, not products of the foundation. The point runs counter to the inference that faith-based support builds ambition; here, ambition came first, and the institution's role is to sustain schooling rather than to create the aim.

The gap between those aims and the skills on offer parallels the finding that early misalignment predicts later occupational mismatch. Whereas that work locates a

²⁷ Elisabeth Moores and Adrian P Burgess, "Financial Support Differentially Aids Retention of Students from Households with Lower Incomes: A UK Case Study," *Studies in Higher Education* 48, no. 1 (2023): 220–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2022.2125950>; Alex Usher, "Finances of the Nation: Student Assistance in Canada—A Long-Term Perspective," *Canadian Tax Journal/Revue Fiscale Canadienne* 72, no. 4 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.32721/ctj.2024.72.4.fn>.

²⁸ Emma Whitelaw, Nicola Branson, and Murray Leibbrandt, "A Dynamic Perspective on Profiling Financial-Aid Eligibility: The Case of South Africa," *Journal of Social Policy* 54, no. 4 (2025): 1047–71, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279423000636>.

²⁹ Suarez and Cameron, "Conditional Cash Transfers: Do They Result in More Patient Choices and Increased Educational Aspirations?"

³⁰ Osborne et al., "Navigating Exclusion: School Responses to the Radical Inclusion Policy for Marginalized Students in Sierra Leone."

³¹ Kelly Nielsen, "'Fake It 'til You Make It': Why Community College Students' Aspirations 'Hold Steady,'" *Sociology of Education* 88, no. 4 (2015): 265–83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040715601889>.

³² Maheen Sultan et al., "'Do Poor People's Dreams Ever Come True?' Educational Aspirations and Lived Realities in Urban Slums in Dhaka, Bangladesh," *European Journal of Development Research* 33, no. 5 (2021): 1409–28, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-021-00439-4>.

mismatch in individual decisions, the present study moves the source of the gap from the individual to the provider: the structure of what the foundation offers, not a deficit in what students want, opens the gap. Set beside the account of aspirations reproducing inequality,³³ the case shows one channel for that reproduction, provision disconnected from aspiration, and it fits the finding that this reproduction is gendered. Gendered and religious expectations shape young Indonesian women's aspirations, which they negotiate both within and against these expectations.³⁴ That students exercise agency, even so, does not close the gap left open by the provision.

Gender-Typed Provision and The Limits of Agency

The third finding shows how that provision is gendered. In this girls' boarding setting, the skills on offer (weaving, knitting, embroidery, and sewing) are the crafts long coded as women's domestic work, grouped under the institution's own category of keputrian. This reads from the structure of provision rather than from outcomes, and it fits the finding that women's vocational paths grow more gender-typical over time than their childhood aspirations,³⁵ and the account of how aspirations for non-traditional fields must be built against gendered defaults.³⁶ Within Islamic schooling, girls reach and negotiate a framed education religiously, without that access widening their options,³⁷ and their course choices do not inevitably follow religious-traditional lines.³⁸ The present case adds a structural qualification: where the skills repertoire is narrow and gender-typed, the set of choices a student can act on shrinks, whatever she aspires to or negotiates.

³³ Svenja Flechtner, "The Reproduction of Inequalities through Educational Aspirations: Evidence from Teenagers in India," *Journal of Development Studies* 60, no. 1 (2024): 46–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2023.2273799>; Saeed Keshavarzi et al., "From Dreams to Possibilities: The Role of Gender and Family Income in Aspirations among Youth in the City of Yazd," *Journal of Youth Studies* 26, no. 7 (2023): 823–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2022.2053664>.

³⁴ Naafs, "Youth, Gender, and the Workplace: Shifting Opportunities and Aspirations in an Indonesian Industrial Town."

³⁵ Lawson et al., "Correlates of Gendered Vocational Development from Middle Childhood to Young Adulthood."

³⁶ Sahai, "Do Job Aspirations Cause Job Choice? Insights from Women Entering Male-Dominated Occupational Training in India."

³⁷ M Niaz Asadullah and Maliki, "Madrasah for Girls and Private School for Boys? The Determinants of School Type Choice in Rural and Urban Indonesia," *International Journal of Educational Development* 62 (2018): 96–111, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2018.02.006>; Hem Borker, "Talim, Dindari Aur Shaadi (Education, Religiosity and Marriage): Choosing Madrasa Education for Girls," *Social Change* 50, no. 2 (2020): 236–53, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049085720920235>.

³⁸ Nathie and Abdalla, "Courses Preferences and Occupational Aspirations of Students in Australian Islamic Schools."

Transferability and an Alternative Explanation

In a single-case design, this study generalizes analytically rather than statistically.³⁹ The mechanism, an inclusive institution reproducing exclusion where a state eligibility threshold, donor dependence, and gender-typed provision meet, may transfer, in Lincoln and Guba's sense,⁴⁰ to comparable faith-based, residential, eligibility-gated settings that serve disadvantaged young people, and readers can judge the transfer by similarity in those structural features rather than in the national or religious context. One rival explanation still needs weighing. The site sits within Minangkabau society, whose matrilineal organization and long accommodation between adat and Islam shape family and gender relations;⁴¹ Girls' continued education may reflect the influence of regional norms more than the foundation's direct contribution. This study does not settle that question, by design: its claim is the rules-and-navigation mechanism inside the institution, not the foundation's causal effect on continuation or mobility. The distinction between educational transition and economic or social mobility, and the refusal to read educational expansion as a proxy for mobility,⁴² holds throughout. The underlying study itself reports that it did not measure mobility through alumni's long-term income, which keeps the present mechanism claim within what the evidence can bear.

Practical Implications

Three implications follow, addressed to institutions of this kind rather than offered as policy. First, the points where eligibility rules exclude, here the age-seventeen ceiling near the higher-education transition and the gate set by the SKTM and DTSEN instruments, deserve the institution's direct attention, including finding and recording the students whom these rules leave unsupported. Second, a skills repertoire held to gender-typed domestic work warrants review against students' stated aspirations; wider provision, or provision linked to broader educational and vocational pathways, would open the set of choices rather than narrow it. Third, steady, cohort-based records of graduates' destinations, with update dates and separate categories, would allow institutions and researchers to study continuation without conflating it with mobility.

³⁹ Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*.

⁴⁰ Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*.

⁴¹ Sebastian, "Matrilineal Practices among Muslims: An Ethnographic Study of the Minangkabau of West Sumatra."

⁴² Brown and James, "Educational Expansion, Poverty Reduction and Social Mobility: Reframing the Debate."

Limitations

Several limitations bound these claims. The study is a single case analyzed by one researcher, with no second coder or intercoder reliability, and the first author's earlier role as a teacher at the site, while it eased access, may have drawn favorable accounts (the Methods describe the safeguards). The corpus of 12 leaves out caregivers, parents, teachers, and a second staff member, so the institutional view rests largely on one administrator. The design lacks a baseline, a comparison group, and longitudinal follow-up, so it cannot separate the foundation's contribution from students' prior aspirations or regional Minangkabau norms. The alumni accounts, being retrospective, invite recall and social desirability effects.

The record of alumni destinations is a sharper constraint, and this article treats it as context rather than a finding. Of 70 senior-secondary graduates across the 2024–2025 cohorts, the record covers 25 (35.7 percent). Of those 25, 19 (76 percent) had continued to higher education, but that share reflects the recorded minority, not the cohort, and is likely to be high. Alumni who continue their education have reasons to stay in touch with the school for transcripts, references, and legal documents, so those missing from the record may be disproportionately those who did not continue their education. The data cannot fix a cohort-wide continuation rate, let alone a claim about economic or social mobility.

Conclusion

This study asked how a faith-based residential foundation's rules and resources determine whom it supports, rather than whether it lifts economically disadvantaged girls out of poverty. The foundation keeps such girls in school through material resources and the running of the school and boarding life. The reach of that support remains bounded: state assistance ends at an age ceiling that falls near the transition to higher education, and reliance on shrinking donor funding makes provision unstable, so one set of rules enables some students and excludes others. At the same time, the skills the foundation offers are gender-typed and sit apart from the aspirations students bring, which narrows what they can act on. Through the duality of structure, the case marks a boundary condition for structuration: it shows an institution built for inclusion that reproduces exclusion within its own walls. Testing how far it reaches will require voices beyond one administrator, namely, caregivers and other staff, along with the policy and funding

documents that underlie the eligibility rules, and steady, cohort-wide follow-up on graduates' destinations.

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Ethical Statement

This study received approval from Universitas Negeri Padang under reference number 888/UN35.11.1/AK/2026. Participation was voluntary, and declining to participate carried no consequence for any assistance participants received. For participants under eighteen, informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians, and assent was obtained from the children themselves. All participant names and identifying institutional details have been withheld to protect confidentiality.

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Conflict of Interest

The first author previously worked as a teacher at the study site; this relationship is described in the Research Methods. The authors declare no other conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

Rahayu Rahmadani: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Project administration. Erianjoni: Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of Generative AI in Scientific Writing

During the preparation of this work, the authors used a generative AI assistant (Anthropic's Claude) to support language editing, structuring and reframing sections, and screening candidate references. After using this tool, the authors reviewed, verified, and edited all content, confirmed every citation against its source, and took full responsibility for the publication's content and integrity.

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