

SCHOOL AND PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF GRADUATION POLICY AT HIGH AT SMA SWASTA YPI DHARMA BUDI

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the perceptions of school authorities and parents regarding the graduation policy that is currently a hot topic of discussion. Graduation at the high school level is often a significant moment marking the end of secondary education; However, policies related to its implementation are still a subject of debate, both from educational and social perspectives. The selection of this topic is driven by the numerous differing views on the urgency and the ideal format of graduation ceremonies. The researcher employs a qualitative research approach using a case study method. The findings indicate that the school authorities view the graduation policy as an important tradition that honors students' efforts and achievements, marking the end of their academic journey and preparation for higher education or the workforce. Parents generally have a positive view, considering graduation as a recognition of their children's hard work and a historical moment worthy of celebration. However, some believe that high school graduations should be simpler and take all costs into account. The main challenges for parents include limited time and work schedules. This research concludes that the graduation policy needs to be designed considering a balance between symbolic and practical needs, and involving active participation from all stakeholders. These findings are important for providing a more comprehensive understanding of the implications of graduation policies on the school community and can serve as a reference for more inclusive and effective policy-making in the future.

Keywords: Perception; Schools and Parents; Graduation Policy.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali persepsi pihak sekolah dan orangtua siswa terhadap kebijakan wisuda yang sedang banyak diperbincangkan. Wisuda di tingkat SMA sering menjadi momen penting yang menandai berakhirnya masa studi di jenjang menengah atas, namun kebijakan terkait pelaksanaannya masih menjadi perdebatan, baik dari sisi pendidikan maupun sosial. Alasan pemilihan topik ini karena banyaknya perbedaan pandangan mengenai urgensi dan bentuk ideal wisuda. Peneliti menggunakan jenis penelitian kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan pihak sekolah memandang kebijakan wisuda sebagai tradisi penting yang menghargai usaha dan prestasi siswa, serta menandai akhir perjalanan akademik mereka dan persiapan menuju jenjang pendidikan yang lebih tinggi atau dunia kerja. Orangtua umumnya memiliki pandangan positif, menganggap wisuda sebagai penghargaan atas kerja keras anak-anak mereka dan momen bersejarah yang patut dirayakan. Namun, ada juga yang berpendapat bahwa wisuda di tingkat SMA seharusnya lebih sederhana dan mempertimbangkan segala biayanya. Kendala utama bagi orangtua mencakup keterbatasan waktu dan jadwal kerja. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kebijakan wisuda perlu dirancang dengan mempertimbangkan keseimbangan antara kebutuhan simbolis dan praktis, serta melibatkan partisipasi aktif dari seluruh pemangku kepentingan. Hasil ini penting untuk memberikan pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif mengenai implikasi kebijakan wisuda terhadap komunitas sekolah dan dapat menjadi referensi dalam pengambilan kebijakan yang lebih inklusif dan efektif di masa mendatang.

Kata kunci: Persepsi; Sekolah dan Orangtua; Kebijakan Wisuda.

INTRODUCTION

Education is not only about mastering knowledge and skills, but also about character formation and active contribution in building a better community and a more prosperous society (Nurrohmah et al., 2023). Every individual in the school environment who pursues the world of education certainly has a goal after they achieve graduation. Celebrating graduation is also a very meaningful moment in a student's life, because after years of studying and facing exams, graduation is proof of their hard work and dedication. Celebrating achievements is often an opportunity to strengthen bonds between students, teachers, and school staff, with events such as graduation parties, parades, or ceremonies bringing the school community together to celebrate shared achievements. Apart from that, celebrating graduation can create lasting memories for students, with moments such as the ceremony of handing over diplomas, giving awards, or farewell speeches from teachers being very memorable moments that will be remembered throughout their lives. It is a time where students can enjoy their achievements, say goodbye to classmates, and start a new chapter in their lives with great enthusiasm and enthusiasm (Makkawaru, 2019).

The recent phenomenon related to graduation celebrations at the high school level has become a renewal of graduation celebrations in the form of graduation ceremonies. In general, graduation is known as a graduation celebration at a university or high school, but with the times, at secondary level schools, graduation has been widely implemented in various schools. Graduation is a very important moment in a person's educational journey. This is the end point of a long academic journey and marks a significant achievement in achieving a bachelor's degree or other educational level. Although the graduation ceremony does not change much from year to year, the essence and ceremonial character remain unchanged. Graduation remains an event laden with symbolic meaning, reflecting not only academic achievement, but also marking an important transition in the lives of the participants. The presence of a graduation ceremony is always able to evoke euphoria and admiration, both for the participants and those in attendance who witnessed it. The solemn atmosphere created during the event was able to have a deep emotional impact, as well as trigger feelings of pride and emotion among all parties involved (Zhahnaz et al., 2022).

The implementation of the graduation policy certainly cannot be separated from problems between the school and the parents of the students. The implementation of the graduation policy does not only involve the school but also involves the parents of the students, and in this process, problems often arise that need to be resolved. The school may have certain policies regarding graduation requirements and procedures that can affect students, while parents often have their own hopes and expectations for the graduation celebration. Problems that arise in connection with graduation policies include differences in views between the school and parents regarding the importance of the event. Recent phenomena on social media show that some parents object to the graduation policy at the secondary school level. This is a problem that arises in connection with graduation policies, including differences in views between the school and parents regarding the importance of the event.

Relevant research related to graduation is very limited. Research findings by Nisa Nuhrohmah, Annissa Kania Fauzani Tarigan, Imas Masitoh (2023) shows the role of teachers and parents is very important in creating precious moments for children. In positive synergy, they are able to strengthen the graduation culture which not only strengthens cultural values but also shapes children's personalities. Through the graduation ceremony, this school succeeded in creating a historic moment that contributed positively to the social, emotional and academic development of children, as well as strengthening the relationship between school and family. Moments such as graduation are not only symbols of achievement, but also enrich children's life experiences, creating an educational environment that supports their holistic growth. Another relevant research is a study conducted by Zhahnaz Azizah Umar (2022) from Hasanuddin University, which examined the implementation of online graduations due to the Covid-19 outbreak. In this research, it was found that many graduates felt disappointed because the graduation they had dreamed of for approximately four years of education had to be delivered in an online format. The Covid-19 pandemic has indeed forced many educational institutions to adapt their graduation ceremonies to comply with strict health protocols, including virtual implementation. The desire of graduates and parents to celebrate academic achievements through traditional graduation events reflects that graduation has enormous symbolic value. Graduation is not just a formality, but an official recognition of the efforts and achievements that have been achieved. Graduation

is not only an important moment for students, but also for parents. For many parents, Graduation is an opportunity for parents to see the results of their hard work manifest in the form of their children's academic achievements. When graduations are held online, parents may feel that this proud moment cannot be celebrated in the way they expected.

The theory used in this research involves the theory of constructive perception, and the theory of organizational communication, the theory of constructive perception, which is held by figures such as Jerome Bruner and Gregory. Through theories like this, we can see how humans are not only passive recipients of information, but as well as active constructors of their understanding of the world. By understanding these constructive processes, we can gain deeper insight into how humans perceive, understand, and interact with their environment, which in turn informs many aspects of cognitive psychology and human development. According to Gregorius, the importance of sensory data is relativized to the process of interpretation and construction by the brain. Thus, excessive focus on sensory data can obscure a deeper understanding of reality, because perception is not a direct reflection of the external world, but the result of complex constructive processes within the human brain (Viera Valencia & Garcia Giraldo, 2019).

Weick's theory of organizing has significance in the field of communication because it uses communication as the main basis for explaining the process of human organizing. Through the communication process, individuals construct meaning, form shared understanding, and carry out organizational tasks. Weick's theory provides a strong logical basis for understanding how people organize through concepts such as sensemaking and enactment. Sensemaking refers to the process by which individuals and groups try to make sense of complex situations by forming meaningful interpretations from the various information available. Meanwhile, enactment describes how individuals and groups transform their understanding into concrete actions within the organization (Suryana, 2013).

This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of school and parent perceptions of graduation policies at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi. By understanding the views and expectations of both parties, it is hoped that more inclusive and effective solutions can be found in designing and implementing graduation policies, which not only respect students' traditions and achievements, but also take into account the welfare and financial capabilities of families.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach, which focuses on collecting rich and in-depth data from the participant's perspective. The case study method was chosen because it provides an opportunity to study various perceptions from schools and parents regarding graduation policies at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi in a specific and detailed context. This research was conducted at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi, a private school located in Jl. Manik Maraja Sari Matondang, Simalungun Regency. Data collection techniques were carried out using observation, interviews and documentation. Data obtained from interviews, observations and documentation were analyzed using triangulation to ensure data validity by confirming findings from various data sources (interviews, observations and documentation). This helps in obtaining a more comprehensive picture. This research complies with the principles of research ethics by ensuring that participants provide conscious consent to participate (informed consent). The confidentiality of participants' identities and information is strictly maintained. Researchers also strive to maintain objectivity and fairness in data analysis and reporting of results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

School Perceptions of Graduation Policies Implemented at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi

Graduation is a very important moment in a person's educational journey, marking the end of a long academic journey and significant achievements, both in achieving a bachelor's degree and at other levels of education. At the high school level, one of which is at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi, graduations have been held since 2018 until now. This graduation policy originated from the idea of the school principal and teacher council who wanted to provide an unforgettable experience for students, while at the same time following the growing trend of graduation celebrations. Taking into account current developments, they consulted to design a graduation event that not only follows the latest trends, but also makes a deep impression on students and parents. This event was attended by the school principal, teacher council, all students in grades 10, 11 and 12, as well as parents, which made it a valuable and meaningful moment.

One form of character education at the event was a speech delivered in three languages, namely Indonesian, English and Arabic, by student representatives as a form of respect and appreciation to the school principal and teacher council. Apart from that, entertainment in the form of art performances also enlivened the atmosphere, showcasing various student creativity such as dance, music and drama, which not only enlivened the event but also provided opportunities for students to showcase their talents. In this event, the school only instructed that the cost of food and the purchase of a sling be Rp. 160,000 and other graduation preparation costs are borne by the school itself. The preparation process for the graduation ceremony is also coordinated with OSIS members so that there is a form of cooperation in preparing for the event to be successful.

Graduation as a Tradition

The results of the research show that the school at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi has a very positive view of the graduation policy. This policy is considered a tradition and important moment that marks students' academic achievements and as a form of appreciation for their efforts during their studies at the high school level. The principal and teacher at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi revealed that although in general graduation is better known in universities, now this trend has shifted, even children in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) have started to experience their academic graduation event which is similar to graduation.

At SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi, the graduation ceremony was carried out well in accordance with the concept they had developed themselves. At SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi, graduation is carried out with a concept developed independently by the school, without the need to copy other institutions. This tradition is considered a fitting reward for students' hard work, helps them feel formal recognition for their achievements, and provides cherished moments that will last a lifetime. Graduation is more than just a celebration, but also a symbol of appreciation and motivation for students to face the next educational challenges.

Graduation as A Symbol Of Student Release

This graduation not only marks the end of the students' academic duties at this school, but is also a symbol of the release of grade 12 students. In this moment, the school is full of pride and emotion to take the students from the time they arrive until they have

to move to the next stage. Graduation is understood as a symbol of release, this graduation is also marked by giving sashes and medals to the students. The sash and medal are not just ceremonial attributes, but also symbols of recognition for the efforts and dedication that students have given throughout their studies.

In this procession, the school principal gave a moral and motivational message to the graduates, reminding them that the journey of life and learning does not end here, but will continue with new challenges and opportunities in the future. It is hoped that this graduation moment will be an unforgettable memory for the students, as well as a milestone that inspires them to continue to develop and contribute to society. With the end of the high school period, students are expected to be able to carry the enthusiasm for learning and the values they have learned to move to the next stage in their lives with full confidence and optimism.

Graduation as A Means of Bonding Friendship Between Parents and Schools

The policy at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi is not just a celebration of student graduation, but also functions as an important means of strengthening the relationship between parents and the school. The policies implemented at this school highlight how important the graduation moment is in building and strengthening these relationships. Graduation provides an opportunity for parents to directly experience pride and happiness in their children's achievements. This is where parents can see the results of their children's hard work and the teachings provided by the school over the years. By attending the graduation procession, parents not only witness their child's academic achievements, but also feel how big a role the school plays in shaping the student's character and future.

Apart from that, the graduation moment is also an opportunity for parents to interact more closely with teachers and school staff, as well as with other parents. This allows for closer and more communicative relationships, which in turn can increase their support for school programs. Parents who feel involved and appreciated tend to be more motivated to participate actively in other school activities, whether in the form of moral, material support or participation in school events. Thus, graduation is not only the end of an academic journey, but also the starting point for strengthening cooperation and communication between schools and parents for the welfare and success of students in the future.

Graduation Provides Character Education

The graduation ceremony at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi is not only seen as a moment to celebrate graduation, but also as an important opportunity to provide character education. Through the graduation procession, the school seeks to strengthen the values of togetherness, respect and appreciation for the learning process that students have gone through. When students, parents and teachers shook hands and hugged each other, it was seen how this event was a means of instilling the values of empathy, gratitude and respectful relationships between them. More than just an academic celebration, graduation is also a moment to strengthen emotional bonds between students, parents and the school.

Students convey their final impressions and messages to the school, often accompanied by words of thanks and good wishes for the future. These moments help build a deep sense of community and foster a more harmonious and supportive educational environment. Thus, graduation not only marks the end of a chapter in students' lives, but also strengthens the foundations of their character, preparing them to face future challenges with the good values that have been instilled during their education at school.

Graduation is A Celebration of Students' Dedication and Hard Work During Their Education

The school believes that graduation is a way to recognize and celebrate students' dedication and hard work throughout their education. Carrying out graduation in a unique way and in accordance with the school's identity is considered capable of reflecting the values and culture they want to instill in students. They feel that every stage of graduation preparation, from planning to implementation, is an educational process, which not only involves the involvement of all parties but also increases the sense of responsibility and togetherness. In addition, this event is considered an effective means of fostering a sense of pride in the school and increasing the motivation of students who are still in school to achieve similar or even higher achievements. Through the graduation policy, the school hopes to provide valuable experiences for students, parents and the entire school community, so that it can support the achievement of the vision and mission of a more

inclusive and sustainable education.

Parents' Perceptions of The Graduation Policy Implemented at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi

In general, parents consider graduation as the end of their children's educational journey at college or university. However, over time, their experience in attending graduation ceremonies has expanded to lower levels of education, such as kindergarten, elementary school, middle school and high school. This indicates that graduation is not just a formal moment to celebrate academic success, but is also an important symbol in appreciating children's achievements and transition to the next stage of education. The research results show that parents' perceptions of the graduation policy at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi vary. Of the 6 informants, the majority of parents of students at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi generally have a very positive view of this graduation policy.

The informants all approved of the graduation ceremony and hoped that this event would continue and be better in the future. However, there are several suggestions from parents who suggest that consideration of costs and separation be carried out simply. Parents feel that the information provided by the school is clear enough, which was conveyed through a meeting held 3 (three) months before the big day, thus giving them sufficient time to prepare all their needs. The meeting also discussed children's graduations as well as information regarding SKHU, diplomas, graduation schedules accompanied by letters. Parents' experience in preparing their children to attend the graduation ceremony is that they participate in preparing the child's personal costs in the form of purchasing uniforms, accessories, delivering salons, and preparing other equipment.

Graduation as an Important and Meaningful Moment for Their Children

They consider graduation an important and meaningful moment for their children because the event not only celebrates academic achievements, but also becomes a symbol of the educational journey they have taken. Most of the parents interviewed stated that the graduation ceremony at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi had gone well and provided a pleasant experience for them and their children. They appreciated the school's efforts in holding a solemn and well-organized event, which not only made their children proud but

also strengthened the bonds of the school community. Graduation is considered a special moment where children can celebrate their accomplishments with their classmates and teachers, reflecting the values of hard work, perseverance, and support from their entire educational environment.

Graduation as a Sign of Appreciation and Respect for Academic Achievement

Graduation is considered a worthy form of recognition for the hard work and academic achievements that children have achieved during their studies in high school. Many parents feel proud and consider graduation as an impressive and meaningful moment for their family. This moment is not only seen as a formal ceremony, but rather as a collective celebration of the educational journey they have gone through together over the years. In the perspective of many of the parents interviewed, graduation is a special opportunity to celebrate and honor the hard work that has been done by them, their children. They see graduation as clear evidence of the dedication and perseverance shown by the children in pursuing their education at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi. This event is also considered a form of appreciation for the important role of families in supporting and encouraging children in achieving their academic goals.

Graduation as Additional Motivation for Their Children

Parents also see graduation as additional motivation for their children to continue to excel and pursue higher education. Graduation is not only considered a ceremonial event, but also as an incentive for students to continue their education to a higher level. For some parents, especially those who can only afford to send their children to high school level, graduation provides satisfaction because they feel they have given their children an experience equivalent to a graduation ceremony at a higher level. Graduation is a highly anticipated moment because it gives the family a great sense of pride and achievement.

Graduation as a Form of Proud of Their Children's Achievements

Parents appreciate this opportunity to show their support and pride in their children's achievements. For parents who can only afford to send their children to high school, graduation is a precious moment that allows them to experience a graduation

ceremony that they may not be able to experience at a higher level of education. These are the moments where they can see the fruits of their children's hard work in completing this stage of their education, and reward them for all the effort and dedication they have put in. Graduation is also a moment for many parents, because this is an opportunity to create unforgettable memories with their children. At the end of their higher education journey at high school, many parents are seen to be moved when the process of wearing a sash with the alumni on it is seen on their children. This event is not only a form of appreciation for children's academic achievements, but also a symbol of family togetherness in supporting and supporting every step of their educational development.

Clifford Geertz's symbolic theory made a major contribution to the way we understand culture as a complex system of meaning. In the context of graduation, Geertz teaches that every element in the ceremony has a meaning that goes beyond just a formal ceremony. For parents, graduation is not only about their children getting a diploma, but also about social and symbolic recognition for their struggle in supporting their children's education. Graduation is a symbol of achievements and aspirations that have been achieved with the support of family and community. Thus, Geertz's symbolic theory helps us understand that high school graduation is not just an individual moment, but also a representation of social dynamics and the deep meaning attached to educational success and family support.

Barriers between the School and Parents of Students regarding the Graduation Policy at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi

Behind an event that appears to be running smoothly and well organized, various obstacles or obstacles are often hidden that the organizers have to face. This also applies to the graduation ceremony at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi, where not only the school faces challenges, but also the students' parents.

Preparations for the Graduation Ceremony Take a Long Time

Preparations for the graduation ceremony at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi require quite a long time and full attention to detail. This process begins 3 (three) months before the implementation day with a series of meetings between the school principal, teacher council and parent committee. This meeting aims to plan an event that meets the

expectations of all parties, including determining the theme, event schedule and choosing decorations. The graduation committee also held several meetings to discuss logistics and technical implementation, from selecting the location to providing the required equipment. This preparation process includes various aspects, such as coordinating with vendors for decorations and food, rehearsals for students who will appear, as well as preparing a detailed event schedule so that all activities can run smoothly and on time.

Apart from technical preparations, preparations for the graduation ceremony at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi also involve efforts to ensure that all students and parents understand the schedule and procedures for the event. The school proactively conveys information through parent meetings and written announcements, ensuring that all parties have sufficient time to prepare. Students who will graduate also receive special guidance to face this important moment, from ceremonial training to mental training to manage feelings during the event. This entire process reflects the school's dedication and commitment to making the graduation ceremony not only a celebration of the end of an academic journey, but also a valuable experience that leaves a deep impression on all participants.

Time Limitations and Parental Work Schedules

However, from the parents' side, there are several obstacles that can prevent their participation in the graduation ceremony. One of the main obstacles is limited time and work schedules of parents. Many of them, especially those who work in the informal sector or have inflexible working hours, often find it difficult to attend graduation ceremonies because they often coincide with work hours or other responsibilities that cannot be left behind. This situation creates its own challenges for families, considering that many parents who are the backbone of the family have to make difficult choices between fulfilling work responsibilities and participating in important moments for their children.

In addition, busy and inflexible workdays often make it impossible to fit into school event schedules, which are often planned in the morning or afternoon. This can be a significant barrier for parents who cannot leave their jobs to attend their children's school events. In many cases, although parents are eager to support their children in school events such as graduations, these limitations can cause them to feel stressed or

disappointed at not being able to participate in person.

Table 1 Summary of Research Results

Aspect	School Perception	Parental Perceptions	Obstacle
Views on Graduation	Positive, important traditions, academic rewards and student release.	Generally positive, academic awards, additional motivation for children, and satisfaction to see their children graduate at high school level, especially for parents who can only send them to high school level.	Parents' time and work schedules. Preparations for the graduation ceremony take quite a long time
Graduation Ceremony	Running smoothly, organized, good collaboration.	It went well, it was appreciated, some found it difficult to balance their time to attend the graduation ceremony.	Difficult to balance time and parents' work schedules.
Benefits of Graduation	Improving school and parent relationships as well as character education for students.	Parental pride, achievement encouragement, family appreciation	Lack of balance in parental time.
Main Obstacles	Preparation takes quite a long time.	Some felt that costs needed to be considered and time limitations in attending the event.	Parental participation is limited.

CONCLUSION

The graduation policy at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi shows that parents generally have a positive view of the graduation ceremony as an important moment in their children's educational journey. They view graduation as a symbol of appreciation for students' academic achievements and as a means to strengthen family and school

community ties. Parents appreciate the school's efforts in organizing the graduation event well, including careful planning and effective communication. Parents generally consider graduation ceremonies as an important and meaningful moment in their children's educational journey. They see it as a symbol of appreciation for academic achievement and as a means to strengthen family ties and the school community. Parents appreciated the school's efforts in organizing the graduation event well, including careful planning, structured organization, and effective communication with them. However, some parents face challenging work schedules that impact their ability to participate fully in the event. To overcome this obstacle, efforts are needed from the school to be more flexible in scheduling events and involve parents more in planning.

Graduation at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi is not only a formal celebration of academic achievement, but also an important moment that strengthens family values such as a sense of pride, support and appreciation for their children's education. Overall, graduation at SMA Swasta YPI Dharma Budi is considered an event that not only celebrates student achievements, but also builds close relationships between the school, parents and students. This reflects a shared commitment to supporting students' educational development and preparing them for a better future. The reflection of character education can also be seen from the greetings, special speeches from students to the school as thanks and farewells, and mutual hugs and group photos.

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