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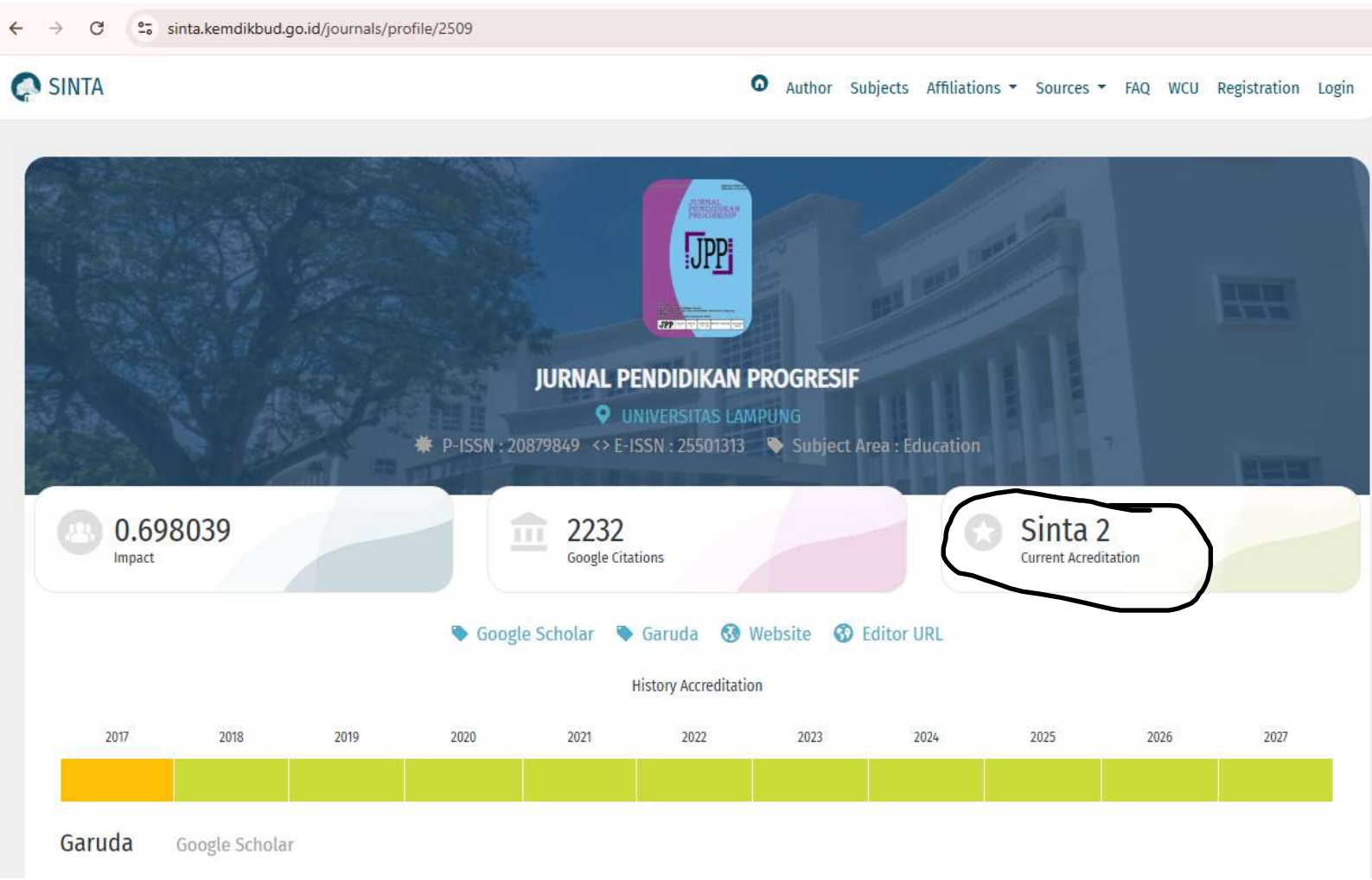

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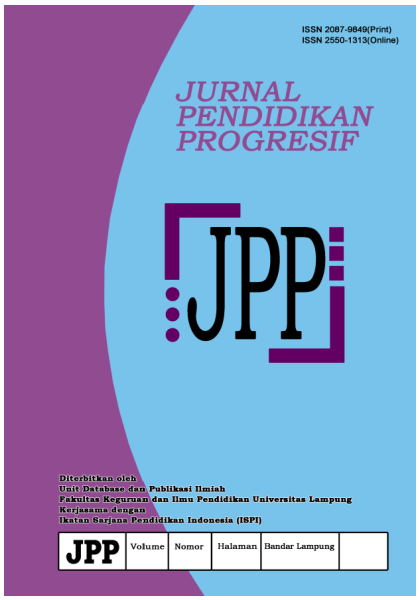

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The Admission of New Student System in the Special Region of Jakarta: Perceptions of Parents, Students, and Teachers

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Abstract: The Admission of New Student System in the Special Region of Jakarta : Perceptions of Parents, Students, and Teachers. The utilization of age as the primary determinant for selection, particularly when the number of applicants exceeds the available capacity in the admission of new students within the Special Region of Jakarta during the 2020-2021 academic cycle, has ignited community controversy. This qualitative inquiry endeavors to elucidate the perspectives of parents, students, and educators concerning the admission of new students in the Special Region of Jakarta. Data were gathered via interviews conducted with 22 parents, 14 students, and 3 teachers affiliated with a junior high school in East Jakarta. Findings underscored a prevailing preference among respondents for prioritizing the distance between a student's residence and the school over the student's age as a selection criterion. They posited that utilizing distance offers distinct advantages and yields more favorable outcomes compared to age-based criteria. However, the majority of participants advocated for academic performance as the most equitable criterion, contending that it acknowledges students' scholarly diligence and fosters a sense of competitiveness. Additionally, the study's outcomes underscore the imperative of endeavors aimed at standardizing the quality and accessibility of public educational institutions to fulfill the objectives of the zoning system in new student admissions while safeguarding students' entitlement to quality education.

Keywords: admission of new student, junior high school, perception, selection criteria.

Abstrak: Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru di DKI Jakarta: Persepsi Orang Tua, Siswa, dan GuruJudul artikel ditulis ulang disini. *[Penggunaan usia sebagai kriteria seleksi utama ketika pendaftar pada jalur zonasi dan jalur afirmasi melebihi daya tampung yang tersedia pada penerimaan peserta didik baru (PPDB) di DKI Jakarta pada Tahun Pelajaran 2020-2021 telah menimbulkan kontroversi di tengah masyarat. Penelitian kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk menggali persepsi orang tua, peserta didik, dan guru terhadap PPDB di DKI Jakarta. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara terhadap 22 orang tua, 14 peserta didik, dan 3 guru di salah satu sekolah menengah pertama di Jakarta Timur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mayoritas informan lebih menyetujui digunakannya jarak antara rumah dan sekolah daripada usia sebagai kriteria seleksi. Mereka berpandangan bahwa penggunaan jarak sebagai kriteria seleksi memiliki lebih banyak kelebihan dan lebih berdampak positif dibandingkan penggunaan usia. Meskipun demikian, mayoritas informan berpandangan bahwa prestasi akademik peserta didik merupakan kriteria seleksi yang lebih adil daripada kriteria lainnya karena lebih memberi penghargaan terhadap kesungguhan peserta didik dalam belajar dan menumbuhkan jiwa kompetisi. Hasil penelitian ini juga menegaskan pentingnya upaya-upaya memeratakan kualitas dan distribusi*

sekolah negeri agar tujuan digunakannya sistem zonasi dalam PPDB dapat tercapai tanpa mengabaikan hak-hak peserta didik atas pendidikan bermutu.

Kata kunci: *penerimaan peserta didik baru, sekolah menengah pertama. Persepsi, kriteria seleksi*

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INTRODUCTION

The admission of new students in public schools in Indonesia has undergone a fundamental change with the implementation of the zoning system. According to Regulation No. 17 of 2017 issued by the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, the primary criterion for selecting candidates for admission to the 7th and 9th grades, constituting 90% of the allocation, is the distance between the prospective student's place of residence and the school, in adherence to established zoning regulations. Subsequently, secondary factors such as age, examination results, and both academic and non-academic accomplishments are considered in the admission process (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017). For Grade 1 admissions, age takes precedence, followed by proximity to the school. Until the 2018-2019 academic year, the minimum quota for admissions through the zoning route for junior and senior high schools remained at least 90%. However, this minimum quota decreased in subsequent academic years to 80% in 2019-2020 and 50% in subsequent years, with the remainder allocated to zoning (at least 50%), affirmation (at least 15%), parental/guardian duty transfer (maximum 5% and the achievement pathway.

Implementing the zoning system policy for the admission of new students to public schools has sparked controversy within the community. Analyzing discussions on social media (Driana, 2018) and research findings (Arif, 2020; Perdana, 2019; Thoha & Gazali, 2020) reveals predominantly negative responses to the policy. The zoning system is viewed negatively for disadvantaging students with higher national exam scores who live farther from the school (Arif, 2020; Lova, 2019), restricting students' freedom to choose the best-suited school (Thoha & Gazali, 2020), diminishing students' motivation to learn (Thoha & Gazali, 2020), and compromising the quality of education (Azanella, 2019)

Conversely, some proponents argue that the zoning system has positive impacts, such as shifting the emphasis away from solely academic values, dismantling the hierarchy of favorite and non-favorite schools, and curbing unethical admission practices (Zaelani, 2019). The revised criteria in the admission of new student sytem have also diversified the student body, particularly in public junior and senior high schools, fostering a more heterogeneous academic environment (Arif, 2020; Perdana, 2019). However, this academic diversity challenges teachers in instructional delivery and assessment.

The Education Office of the Special Capital Region of Jakarta adopted a contrasting approach for the new student admission in the 2020/2021 academic year. In cases where applicants exceed capacity for the zoning and affirmation pathways, age becomes a selection criterion, favoring older participants as stipulated in the Decree of the Head of the Education Office of the Special Capital Region of Jakarta Province Number 501 of 2020. In the 2019/2020 academic year, the national exam scores served as the selection criteria when zoning pathway applicants exceeded available capacity. This change prompted protests within the community, with demands for the abolition of age-based selection criteria due to perceived disadvantages for younger children (Chaterine, 2020)

Access to quality education is enshrined as a fundamental right for every citizen under Article 5 Paragraph (1) of Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System. However, limited school capacities compared to the number of applicants necessitate a selection process. Moreover, the disparity in school quality exacerbates competition among prospective students for these limited slots, rendering the period of new student admissions a focal point of attention and controversy in the community. Thus, the

procedures employed to determine admissions to high-quality schools assume critical importance (Prieto et al., 2023).

In public school admissions, two primary systems emerge: those mandating attendance at predetermined schools and those allowing extensive school choice within communities (Böhlmark et al., 2016). Based on student domicile, the former has been a longstanding practice globally, notably in Europe, the United States, and Japan. Here, students are allocated to schools based on their residential locations, demarcated as "catchment areas" or "school zones" (Põder et al., 2017, p. 672). While this system offers the advantage of attending schools in familiar neighborhoods, it has limitations. Students may face restricted opportunities for superior education if quality schools are absent in their vicinity, potentially perpetuating socio-economic segregation tied to local community conditions (Sattin-Bajaj, 2014). Moreover, it is susceptible to fraudulent practices, such as falsifying residences to access higher-quality schools (Põder et al., 2017).

In recent decades, many nations have leaned towards granting parents greater autonomy in selecting suitable schools for their children (Böhlmark et al., 2016; Liu & Apple, 2016). This shift aims to stimulate competition among schools, promoting the delivery of higher-quality education more efficiently (Angus, 2013; Böhlmark et al., 2016; Liu & Apple, 2016). Furthermore, it is believed to enhance children's prospects of accessing superior education beyond their immediate neighborhoods (Ely & Teske, 2015) (Ely & Teske, 2015). However, referring to various previous studies, Sattin-Bajaj (2014) states that, families with higher socio-economic status enjoy advantages, including better access to information, broader social networks, financial means, and more time for school selection, exacerbating disparities in school choice between affluent and low-income families.

Admission systems also diverge based on whether they select students according to academic criteria (selective schools) or not (comprehensive schools). A system that selects students based on academic achievement aligns with the principle of meritocracy, which dictates that the best schools are reserved for students who demonstrate high academic potential and a commitment to learning, irrespective of their family background (Exley, 2020) Nonetheless, this approach is criticized for perpetuating advantages for children from wealthier families due to the correlation between academic success and social status (Exley, 2020)).

Comprehensive schools typically eschew selection criteria in admitting new students. However, when demand exceeds capacity, admission criteria are established. In the UK, for instance, criteria for comprehensive school admissions often encompass having a sibling at the school, proximity to the school, catchment area, and medical/social considerations (Burgess et al., 2019). In Seoul, South Korea, prior to 2010, the process of high school admissions followed a randomized allocation approach, assigning students to schools within their respective domicile zones (Oh & Sohn, 2019). However, since 2010, high school admissions have transformed to accommodate student choice through a three-round process. Initially, students select two schools anywhere in Seoul City in the first round, followed by choosing two schools within their residential zone in the second round. Placement occurs via a computer-based lottery, and if students remain unassigned after the second round, they are randomly assigned a school in a larger zone comprising their residential area and the nearest zone.

In comparison, the admission of new student system implemented in Indonesia combines multiple admission systems, including zoning, affirmation, achievement, academic and non-academic criteria, and parental duty transfer. It also allows

registration outside the domicile zone through the achievement pathway. This combination of selection methods aims to mitigate potential negative impacts that may arise from reliance on a single system.

Further research on the new student admission system in the Special Capital Region of Jakarta is warranted to enhance understanding. Previous studies have examined various aspects, such as parents' perceptions, students' perspectives on age-based selection, evaluation of PPDB implementation in specific schools, and analysis of the new student admission policies using public tweets. This research aims to contribute to the existing literature by exploring the viewpoints and experiences of diverse stakeholders, including parents, students, and teachers. Insights from stakeholders can provide valuable information for policymakers in devising admission systems that promote equitable access to quality education and foster a sense of equity within the community.

METHOD

Research Design

This qualitative research employed a phenomenology approach that involved different stakeholders that deal with the admission of new student processes during the 2020-2021 academic year in the Special Region of Jakarta. A phenomenology approach was chosen to explore the perspectives and experiences of parents, students, and teachers. This research employed a purposeful sampling method with a strategy to maximize the variation of participants. Therefore, this research involved parents whose children were accepted through different admission pathways, those whose children were not, students who were accepted and those who were not, and teachers. The study was conducted at a junior high school in DKI Jakarta, previously renowned as one of the favored institutions before implementing the zoning-based student admission system.

Participants

This research involved 39 participants, comprising 22 parents, 14 students, and three teachers. All engaged in the new student admission process during the 2020-2021 academic year at a junior high school in the Special Region of Jakarta, previously renowned as one of the favored institutions before implementing the zoning-based student admission system. Most parents held undergraduate degrees, with 21 females and one male among them (Table 1). The student participants comprised nine females and five males, aged between 12 and 13 years old. The three teachers included one male with a master's degree and two females with bachelor's degrees.

Table 1. Description of Parents by Education, Gender, and Child Acceptance Status

	Acceptance Status				Total	
	Accepted (n = 13)		Not Accepted (n = 9)		(N = 22)	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Highest Education						
S1	7	53.85	6	66.67	13	59.09%
D3	1	7.69	0	0	1	4.55%
SMA/SMK	4	30.77	1	11.11	5	22.73%
SMP	1	7.69	2	22.22	3	13.64%
Gender						
Female	13	100	8	88.89	21	95.45%
Male	0		1	11.11	1	4.55%

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Data Collection and Instruments

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Semi-structured interviews were employed following the preparation of interview questions to serve as guidelines, with provisions for the researcher to adapt and refine inquiries during the interview session. The second author conducted the interviews through diverse modalities, encompassing face-to-face interactions, online platforms, and written correspondence. Each interview session typically spans approximately 30 minutes per participant. Before the interviews, participants provide formal consent by signing a document authorizing their participation in the interview process and potential recording of the proceedings.

Data obtained from interviews were transcribed verbatim by the second author. To ensure confidentiality, parent and student participants were assigned a four-letter code, with the first letter denoting their role (parent = P, student = S) and the subsequent letters indicating their admission status ("ZON" for those admitted through the zoning pathway, "ACH" for those admitted through the achievement pathway, "AFF" for those admitted through the affirmation pathway, and "NAC" for those not admitted). Parent and student codes based on admission status are delineated in Table 2, whereas the teachers were coded “Teacher” followed by a number.

Table 2. Parent and Student Codes Based on Admission Status

Acceptance Status	Parent Code	Total	Student Code	Total
Accepted through Zoning Pathway	PZON1, PZON2, PZON3, PZON4, PZON5	5	SZON1, SZON2, SZON3, SZON4	4
Accepted through Achievement Pathway	PACH1, PACH2, PACH3, PACH4, PACH5, PACH6	6	SACH1, SACH2, SACH3, SACH4	4
Accepted through Affirmation	PAFF1, PAFF2	2	-	0
Not Accepted	PNAC1,PNAC2, PNAC3,PNAC4, PNAC5,PNAC6, PNAC7,PNAC8, PNAC9	9	SNAC1, SNAC2, SNAC3, SNAC4, SNAC5, SNAC6	6
Total		22		14

Data Analysis

The first and second authors engaged in typological analysis (Hatch, 2002)) by categorizing the data into typologies corresponding to the research questions. Subsequently, data within each category were scrutinized to discern patterns, relationships, and themes. The analysis of interviews with parents and teachers yielded four overarching themes: attitudes towards, pros and cons of, and the impact of the admission of new student system, as well as primary selection criteria for the admission of new student system in public schools.

▪ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Attitude towards the Admission of New Student Criteria

The interview findings indicate that parents are more inclined to accept distance as a criterion for new student admission than age. Among the 22 parents interviewed, 16 (72.73%) agreed with using distance as an admission of new student criterion, while the remaining disagreed. Conversely, only 2 out of 22 parents (9.09%) supported age as a selection criterion, as illustrated in Figure 1.

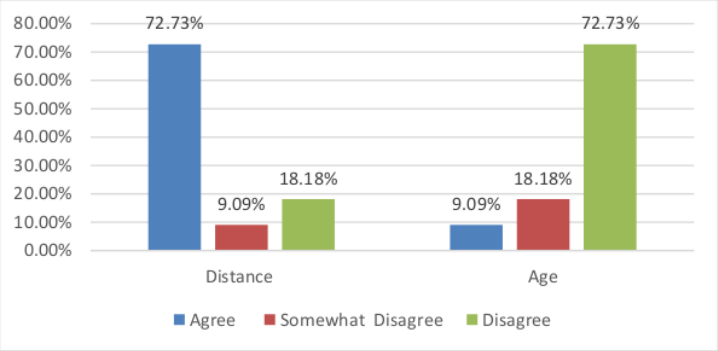

Figure 1. Parents' Attitudes towards the Admission of New Student Criteria

Parents who favored using distance as a criterion highlighted the convenience of having schools nearby for their children. However, among the 16 parents who agreed with zoning-based admission of new student, 3 provided additional comments. For instance, PACH3 supported zoning but not as the primary criterion, PACH4 agreed under the condition of having a public school in each neighborhood, and PNAC 2 expressed dissatisfaction with the limited school options available. The reasons for the four parents who disagreed included the inability to choose preferred schools, discrepancies between the mapped and actual distances from home to school, absence of nearby public schools, and unequal distribution of public schools across neighborhoods.

Parents opposed using age as a criterion because it would prevent younger children who started primary school at six from enrolling in public junior secondary schools. They also believed that children's chronological age does not inherently ensure their preparedness for educational endeavors. The two parents who supported using age as a criterion noted its potential benefits for older students, attributing delays in schooling to economic factors rather than negligence. Most parents against using age as

a criterion echoed the findings of Ratnawati and Iljas (2021), who analyzed public sentiment toward the admission of the new student system in the Special Region of Jakarta through Twitter.

In the admission of new students in Jakarta, an affirmative pathway is given to applicants holding the Jakarta Smart Card. The parents involved in this research exhibited varying perspectives on this preference. For instance, PZON4 supported the new student admission policy in DKI Jakarta as it prioritizes disadvantaged children via the affirmative pathway.

> "I support it because it prioritizes the disadvantaged. We know that wealthy individuals excel due to tutoring, supplements, and nutritious meals. Conversely, our underprivileged children solely rely on inherent abilities without such assistance. Hence, I endorse this affirmative pathway." (PZON4)

On the other hand, PACH2 raised objections to the preferential treatment given to students admitted via the affirmative pathway, as she believed that recipients of the Jakarta Smart Card included not only those from the lower-middle economic class but also students from the upper-middle economic class. This indication undoubtedly calls for additional scrutiny to guarantee the accuracy of the Jakarta Smart Card targeting.

Meanwhile, two of the ten students explicitly shared their views on using distance as a selection criterion. One student argued that employing distance as a criterion brings the home-school distance closer. In contrast, despite residing far from home, another student concurred after being admitted to a public school. Eight students disagreed, providing reasons such as students whose homes are far from the school, despite having high achievements, will lose out to students who live close to the school even if their grades are low. Furthermore, there are no public schools located in the vicinity of the students' residences.

> "I disagree because many high-achieving students are unable to access public schools due to distance or age restrictions imposed by this system." (SNAC3)

Concerning age as a selection criterion, eight students expressed dissent, citing perceived unfairness towards younger students. This majority stance aligns with research conducted by Tripujianti et al. (2021) that investigates student perspectives on the new student admission process in the Special Region of Jakarta during the 2020-2021 academic year. Their research revealed that 10 out of 13 high school students disagreed with age-based selection criteria, as it disadvantaged highly-achieving students who could not compete with older peers with lower academic performance.

Conversely, interviews with three teachers revealed unanimous support for the new student admission system employing distance as a criterion. The reasons cited encompass enhanced student accessibility, comfort within familiar surroundings, reduced transportation expenses, improved teacher-parent communication, and mitigation of school favoritism biases. However, teachers unanimously objected to age-based selection criteria, contending that age does not inherently correlate with students' preparedness for learning, and such criteria disproportionately benefit older students at the expense of younger counterparts.

Pros and Cons of the Admission of New Student System

The positive attitudes exhibited by parents, students, and teachers are intricately linked to their views on the benefits of the admission of new student system.

Conversely, the unfavorable views are closely tied to the drawbacks of the admission of new student system. According to most participants, the distance-based admission system facilitates students' access to schools closer to their homes. For instance, "We can go to school close to home and feel comfortable, have no worries, and save energy" (PZON3).

Research conducted by Elvira (2021) illustrates that school location significantly influences parents' choices of high schools for their children in East Jakarta, alongside factors such as word of mouth and social considerations. Studies conducted in other nations, like Sarawak, Malaysia, indicate that proximity to home is the primary factor considered by parents, irrespective of ethnic background, when selecting primary schools for their children. Additional factors include the language of instruction and the school's academic reputation. This inclination towards choosing schools near their residence is also observed in Seoul, South Korea, which transitioned from a proximity-based system to a more flexible school selection process for high school students starting in 2010 (Oh & Sohn, 2019). However, in the UK, the proximity of home to school holds little significance in school selection (Burgess et al., 2019).

Another advantage highlighted by the participants is that the implementation of admission of the new student selection system in the Special Region of Jakarta is deemed highly timely, and the unethical practice of selling school seats is no longer in place (PNAC9). Furthermore, the new student admission system offers children from disadvantaged backgrounds opportunities to access public schools despite their academic struggles (PNAC4).

In contrast to the perspectives on zoning-based new student admission systems, the majority of respondents asserted that the age-based new student admission system has no discernible advantages, as articulated in the following statement:

> "There are no advantages of using age as the selection criteria. It is very unfair. It only benefits older children while the young are eliminated. Many affluent families send their academically proficient children to private schools due to the lack of competitiveness in public schools" (Teacher 2).

Parents also expressed the need to improve the zoning and age-based admission of new student systems. Overall, the admission of new student system is perceived as disadvantaging high-achieving students who either live further from schools or are younger, as evidenced by the following remarks:

> "Children cannot access public schools due to their young age and distant residence, despite their excellent academic performance" (PZON 5).

Moreover, some parents identified shortcomings in the admission of new student system, occasionally encountering technical issues. Implementing a digital registration system requires robust infrastructure and accessibility for users. However, the registration portal experiences glitches in practice, hindering registrants' access (Kasiati et al., 2021; Ratnawati & Iljas, 2021). This research also uncovered inaccurate synchronization between student residences and designated zones. Additionally, there is a need for increased socialization efforts surrounding the admission of new student system to provide clarity for parents and students alike.

Impact of the Admission of New Student System

The proximity of home to school yields several benefits for parents and students. These advantages encompass saving transportation expenses, facilitating parental supervision, and alleviating anxiety and concerns. Furthermore, according to PZON4, the admission of new student system diminishes parents' inclination to favor particular schools. Zaelani (2019) posits that such zoning mechanisms hold promise in eradicating the labeling of public schools as favored or disfavored, thereby fostering equitable distribution of educational quality. A systematic literature review by Ardi et al. (2023) underscores the beneficial outcomes of a zoning-based new student admission system, including equitable educational access, decreased transportation costs, heightened parental engagement, bolstered community cohesion, diminished socioeconomic disparities, and curtailed commercialization practices in student admissions. Nevertheless, further investigation on a broader scale is requisite to assess the positive ramifications on educational access and quality comprehensively.

The results of this research align with those of Berkhout et al. (2022), conducted in Yogyakarta at the junior high school level, which evidenced a rise in the prevalence of students exhibiting lower academic performance within public schools renowned for their established academic prestige. These institutions are historically associated with a student body with high academic achievement. Conversely, students with superior national exam scores may be ineligible for admission to these schools. Moreover, schools serving as alternatives for students with high final exam scores often fail to implement substantial learning adjustments. Therefore, it raises concerns regarding the need for academically adept students to fully realize their potential (Berkhout et al., 2022) 16

However, the implementation of the admission of new student system has engendered adverse effects on the psychological well-being of both parents and students, including feeling stressed, confused, shocked, anxious, disappointed, and hopeless. These conditions stem from the system's prioritization of factors such as age and proximity over academic performance. Additionally, the need for more public schools within a locality compounds parental distress in securing enrollment for their children. They expressed sympathy for the children who could not secure admission to a public school despite demonstrating commendable academic performance through diligent research efforts. The following excerpt encapsulates the emotional feelings l experienced by parents:

> "The issue that particularly distressed me was the initial reliance on my child's grades as a benchmark, only to encounter age-based considerations. Nevertheless, I persevered until the end" (PACH1).

The zoning-based admission system also impacts students, as evidenced by the sentiments expressed by students in this research. These sentiments include feelings of palpitations, stress, and confusion, particularly among those who failed to secure admission to public schools of their preference. For instance, one student articulated confusion and stress stemming from unsuccessful attempts to gain admission to their desired school through all available admission of new student pathways.

> "I am confused and stressed about where I want to go to school... if I go to a private junior high school, I feel sorry for my mom. It is quite expensive." (SNACT1)

Another adverse consequence that concerns parents is the potential decline in children's motivation to learn, given that the primary criteria for school admissions no longer prioritize students' academic achievements. Admission to a public school is considered a significant motivator for children's learning endeavors, as expressed by a parent:

> "Now, children think they do not need to research. What matters is being older. Being older means you can choose the school you want. There is no motivation." (PNAC 2)

Furthermore, certain parents express concerns regarding the potential decline in children's intrinsic motivation towards learning, apprehensive of its repercussions on educational quality in Indonesia. The following are perspectives articulated by these parents:

> "Students lack enthusiasm for learning due to limited opportunities for admission to public schools. Consequently, this negatively impacts the overall educational standards in Indonesia." (PNAC 3)

Parents' apprehensions regarding the declining education quality resulting from the changes in the public school admission system warrant attention from policymakers. The public junior high school under examination has a historical record of commendable academic achievements. Before implementing the zoning-based new student admission system, this institution held the coveted status of a favored school. However, the zoning-based new student admission system has gradually eroded this favored school designation. Consequently, teachers accustomed to instructing academically proficient students must now cater to a more heterogeneous student body, necessitating innovative pedagogical approaches and instructional tools.
The results of this study align with those of research conducted by Berkhout et al. (2022) at the junior high school level in Yogyakarta, indicating a surge in the enrollment of students with lower academic performance in public schools renowned for their academic excellence, traditionally dominated by high-achieving students. While this shift may ostensibly promote fairness by challenging the perception that high-achieving students are inherently more deserving of admission to prestigious schools, it concurrently implies the dissolution of the favored and non-favored school labels. Nevertheless, Berkhout et al.'s (2022) findings underscore a tendency among teachers to adapt their teaching methodologies to accommodate less proficient students, potentially diminishing their motivation to elevate their school's standing based on national examination rankings.

Primary Admission of New Student Criteria

This research delved into participants' perspectives regarding the primary admission of new student criteria. Among the 22 parents involved, 14 emphasized academic achievement, citing indicators such as report card grades or final exam results as paramount criteria, superseding considerations of zone, age, or affirmation. Similarly, eight students explicitly advocated prioritizing grades within the admission of new student selection criteria. All interviewed teachers concurred that academic achievement should hold precedence, complemented by motivational test outcomes (Teacher 1) and non-academic achievements (Teacher 2 and Teacher 3). While parents' viewpoints exhibited some diversity, the prevalent emphasis remained on academic performance

indicators, such as report cards and test scores. Reasons cited included believing that children with superior academic achievement are better equipped for learning (PACH2). Moreover, employing grades as a selection criterion for advancement to higher educational levels fosters a competitive ethos among students to excel (PZON 2 and PZON 3).

The participants also articulated the perspective that employing grades as a selection criterion was perceived as being inherently fairer when juxtaposed with alternative criteria. They contended that students exhibiting commendable academic performance merit admission to public schools as a form of acknowledgment for their diligent efforts during their preceding educational endeavors. (PNAC 4, PNAC 5, PNAC 6, and Teacher 1).

> "Reward them for their efforts over six years to achieve good grades and secure admission to the state junior high school. This recognition will instill a sense of gratitude, especially considering their financial constraints, yet possessing commendable intellect and motivation. Why should they not gain admission to their desired school despite their youthfulness? Fairness is not about equalizing everything. It is about deserving what one earns. If 16-year-olds are permitted to enroll in public junior high schools, subjecting them to testing is equitable." (Teacher 1).

Concerning selection criteria, the participants also conveyed their aspirations concerning the admission of new student system, which they regarded as more advantageous and equitable. The predominant aspiration voiced was prioritizing student grades as the principal determinant, thereby assigning the highest quota to the achievement pathway. Some parents, while accepting the existence of the zoning pathway, urged improvements, including broadening the selection of schools (PNAC2), expanding the zone radius to encompass students residing in the same sub-district as the school location (PAFF2), ensuring equitable determination of radius parameters (PACH4), and evaluating school availability within each designated zone (PNAC 3).

Moreover, a predominant sentiment among the informants expressed a desire to discontinue age-based selection criteria. Nonetheless, a minority perspective exists among those who still advocate for age-based selection, albeit with the caveat of reducing its quota allocation (PACH2). One student proposed the elimination of both zone-based and age-based admission of new student pathways, advocating for grades as the sole selection criterion:

> "I hoped that zoning and age-based pathways will be eliminated." (PZON 2).

The long-standing use of academic achievement indicators, such as school entrance test results, report card scores, or national exam scores, as selection criteria has garnered societal acceptance in Indonesia and is perceived as equitable. Prioritizing children with exemplary academic performance for admission to reputed public schools is deemed fairer than alternative selection criteria.

These findings diverge from those of Pradita (2020), who examined parental perceptions of admission of new student in a junior high school in DKI Jakarta during the 2019 academic year, where national exam scores served as selection criteria when applicants within a neighborhood/ward-based zone exceeded available quotas. Parents in that research disapproved of using grades as a selection criterion, fearing their children's rejection from desired schools despite residing close to them.

▪ CONCLUSION

The formulation of admission of new student system that achieves equality and equity amidst disparities in school quality, uneven distribution of educational institutions, and limited school capacities represents a multifaceted decision-making process. The various selection pathways delineated within the admission of new student framework are designed to uphold principles of equality and equity. However, the implementation of these selection mechanisms frequently engenders controversy within the community. Similarly, the utilization of age as a determinant for admitting new students in the Special Region of Jakarta, particularly when the number of applicants surpasses available seats, has elicited diverse public reactions.

Most parents, students, and teachers participating in this research exhibited a propensity to disfavor age as a selection criterion, deeming it unjust towards younger students. In contrast, including distance between students' residences and schools as a selection criterion garnered relatively more acceptance among participants. Furthermore, using distance as a selection criterion was perceived to yield more advantages and positive outcomes compared to age-based criteria. Nonetheless, the prevailing sentiment among the participants in this research, encompassing students admitted through various selection pathways beyond merit-based criteria, favored academic achievement as a more equitable selection criterion. Academic performance was regarded as a manifestation of students' learning endeavors and a motivational factor for continued academic pursuit.

This research exclusively engaged participants comprising students who submitted applications to a specific junior high school in East Jakarta, parents who facilitated enrollment for their children—encompassing both accepted and rejected applicants—and teachers who taught at the school. To explore stakeholders' perspectives on the admission of new student system, broader research needs to be conducted at various levels of education. In addition, it is necessary to evaluate the impacts of admission of new student system on student composition and learning in schools. Research by simulating various selection criteria, including the use of lotteries, can also be conducted to obtain a selection system that better fulfills the elements of equality and equity.

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