J U R N A L PENELITIAN KEBIJAKAN PENDIDIKAN

Volume 18
Nomor 2/2025

Naskah diterima:
17 April 2025

direvisi akhir:
16 September 2025

disetujui:
10 Desember 2025

HAS THE NEW STUDENT ADMISSION POLICY ACHIEVED ITS INTENDED GOALS? A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

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doi : 10.24832/jpkp.v18i2.1255

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine whether the implementation of the New Student Admission (Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru [PPDB]) policy promotes equitable access to quality education in Indonesia. Using National Socio-Economic Survey (Susenas, 2015–2021) data, the study assesses changes in student mobility from low socioeconomic backgrounds, transportation costs to school, and participation of students with disabilities. School-level National Examination scores from 2015 to 2019 were analyzed to assess changes in the distribution of learning outcomes before and after PPDB implementation. The findings indicate that PPDB has expanded access for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds by increasing enrollment in public schools and reducing transportation costs through proximity-based admissions. Disparities in learning outcomes across schools have narrowed over time; however, this reduction is primarily attributable to declining performance in previously high-performing schools rather than significant improvements in low-performing schools. Although PPDB provides a pathway for students with disabilities to enter public schools, its effectiveness in promoting disability inclusion remains limited, as school readiness and accessibility have not improved significantly. The results suggest that PPDB contributes to greater equity in access, but its success in sustaining learning quality and inclusive education requires complementary policies targeting school capacity, teacher preparedness, and inclusive infrastructure.

Keywords: student admission; education inequality; zoning; affirmation; disadvantaged groups

INTRODUCTION

Education is recognized as a key pathway for improving individuals' chances of attaining a decent life. In Indonesia, this right is guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution, Article 31 (1), which states that every citizen has the right to education, and is further detailed in the National Education System Law No. 20/2003. Persistent challenges in achieving equitable education services include (a) unequal access to education; (b) low-quality teaching practices; (c) limited teacher competencies; and (d) inadequate school environments. Inequitable access is influenced by factors such as differing economic growth rates, socioeconomic status, and geographical conditions (Burušić et al., 2013; Sukadari et al., 2020; Nugroho et al., 2013). Rural areas continue to experience lower school participation rates than urban areas, and children from low socioeconomic backgrounds often lack the resources to attend school, increasing dropout rate (Burušić, et al., 2013; Banzragch, et al., 2019; Yuki & Ono, 2019).

Educational equity can be strengthened by improving multiple components, including parental education, family economic background, teacher quality, home learning resources, and language use (Põder et al., 2017). According to OECD (2018a), equity is achieved when all students have equal opportunities to enroll, persist, succeed in learning, and obtain meaningful post-school outcomes.

Inequality in access to quality manifests in several ways:

1. Students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds cluster in better-performing schools, while students from low-SES backgrounds are concentrated in lower-performing schools.
2. As a result, differences in school-level learning outcomes emerge—schools with higher-performing student intakes tend to produce higher average achievement.
3. High education-related costs, particularly transportation, restrict access for low-SES students.
4. Students with disabilities face additional barriers to accessing public schools, requiring more inclusive policies (Hayes & Bulat, 2017).

Various strategies can be implemented to reduce educational disparities, including improving infrastructure, equalizing teacher distribution, updating curricula, and reforming the new student admission (PPDB) policy (Agyei et al., 2024; Peske, 2006). PPDB was introduced to address inequality by regulating the mechanisms through which students enter schools. The PPDB policy includes three primary pathways: zoning, affirmation, and achievement. The zoning pathway admits students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and students with disabilities, whereas the achievement pathway admits students with academic or nonacademic achievements. These mechanisms aim to expand access for low-SES students and reduce disparities (Raharjo et al., 2020; Zamjani et al., 2024).

This study aims to examine the impact of the *Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru* (PPDB) policy on reducing gaps in educational services. For this reason, it is necessary to examine the conditions prior to the implementation of the PPDB regulations, which were introduced in 2015 (Table 1).

Data from the 2015 National Socio-Economic Survey (Susenas) show that only 7.9% of all students in public schools were from underprivileged backgrounds, while the majority came from more privileged families. This pattern is also evident at the elementary, junior high, and senior high school levels, with the largest disparity observed at the secondary school. These findings suggest that the higher the level of education—and consequently the higher the associated costs—the more likely public schools are to be attended by students from high-SES backgrounds. In fact, although public schools are prioritized by the government in terms of quality and access, the limited proportion of students from low-SES backgrounds indicates persistent disparities in access and participation.

Regarding transportation costs, Susenas 2015 data indicate that the average daily cost of transportation to school was IDR 5,539.00. On a monthly basis, transportation expenses accounted for approximately 6.43% of the average provincial minimum wage (UMP) in 2015 (IDR 5,539 x 20 school days ÷ IDR 1,721,500). Although access to education is a civil right in Indonesia, transportation costs have become a barrier, particularly for students who must travel long distances. At higher levels of education, these costs increase further due to limited school availability and competition for entry into so-called "favorite schools."

Table 1 Gap Conditions in 2015

Indicators	Gap conditions before PPDB
Student participation in public schools	**All levels** Students from high SES backgrounds: 92.1% Students from low SES backgrounds: 7.9% **Elementary school** Students from high SES backgrounds: 90.1% Students from low SES backgrounds: 9.9% **Junior high school** Students from high SES backgrounds: 92.3% Students from low SES backgrounds: 7.7% **Senior high School** Students from high SES backgrounds: 94.0% Students from low SES backgrounds: 6.0%
Average student transportation costs	**Total cost:** IDR 5,539.00 **Elementary school:** IDR 3,202.00 **Junior high school:** IDR 5,663.00 **Senior high school**:IDR 7,782.00
Learning outcomes (average UN score)	Districts/cities in the **lowest 10%**: 34.4 Districts/cities in the **highest 10%**: 87.3
Disability participation	Students with disabilities attending **public Schools**: 69.4% Students with disabilities attending **special schools**: 6.0%

Source: National Socio-Economic Survey (*Survei Sosial Ekonomi Nasional* [Susenas], 2015), calculated by author

In addition to access, disparities in learning outcomes remain a significant concern. Education is meaningful only when it ensures effective learning, not merely school attendance. However, educational quality varies substantially across regencies and cities. Based on the 2015 National Examination (UN) results, the lowest-performing 10% of regencies/cities recorded an average score of 34.4, whereas the highest-performing 10% achieved an average score of 87.3. These figures indicate that equitable access to quality education had not yet been achieved in 2015.

Ensuring that education is accessible to all students—regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or disability status—is equally important. In 2018, approximately 69.4% of students with disabilities attended general (inclusive) schools, whereas only 6.0% attended special schools. Despite these figures, overall participation among students with disabilities remains limited, underscoring the need to better understand and address barriers to educational access for this group.

One policy intended to promote greater equity is the New Student Admission system (*Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru* [PPDB]). The PPDB policy is regulated under the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 14 of 2018 and was later revised through Regulation No. 1 of 2021. Under this framework, regional governments are authorized to develop technical implementation policies adapted to their

local contexts. Through this decentralized approach, the policy aims to promote a more equitable distribution of high-quality education across Indonesia.

PPDB Concept in Indonesia

Article 2, paragraph 1 of the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 1 of 2021 states that PPDB must be implemented in an objective, accountable, transparent, and nondiscriminatory manner in order to promote access to educational services. The policy takes into account academic and/or nonacademic potential, geographic conditions, culture, gender, and socioeconomic status, particularly in kindergartens, elementary schools, junior high schools, senior high schools, vocational schools, and equivalent institutions. PPDB can also influence important factors related to students' potential and needs, such as interests, talents, learning abilities, place of residence, family background, cultural context, and gender equality (OECD, 2018b).

Furthermore, Article 12, paragraph 2 and Article 13 specify that student admission pathways may include: (1) zoning (a minimum of 50% of school capacity for junior and senior high schools and 70% for elementary schools), (2) affirmation (a minimum of 15% of capacity), (3) parental relocation (a maximum of 5% of capacity), and (4) achievement-based admission (the remaining available quota).

Prior to the implementation of PPDB in 2017, the admission process allowed prospective students to apply to any school and be ranked primarily according to their National Examination (UN) scores. However, this system created significant problems. Ula and Lestari (2020) found that high-scoring students tended to cluster in certain preferred schools, reinforcing educational inequality. National Examination results became a barrier for students living close to a school but unable to meet its academic cutoff. Moreover, the freedom to choose schools enabled families from certain socioeconomic backgrounds to concentrate their children in "favorite schools," thereby marginalizing less prestigious institutions (Ho, 2021; Põder, 2017).

Benefits of Zoning Policies Across Sectors

From ecological and economic perspectives, students who attend distant schools must rely on private or public transportation, thereby increasing both transportation costs and carbon emissions (Perdana, 2019; Sims et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2007). Road-based transportation alone accounts for approximately 72% of transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions (Sims et al., 2014). Therefore, the zoning-based PPDB system, which prioritizes proximity to school, has positive implications not only for educational equity, but also for household finances, public health, and environmental sustainability.

Families with higher socioeconomic status (SES) tend to play a more active role in shaping their children's educational trajectories (Holme, 2002; Rohman, 2012). These families often encourage their children to enroll in schools they perceive as superior, a practice consistent with Bourdieu's (1984) concept of "taste" in relation to social and cultural capital. Numerous studies have also demonstrated that students' academic performance is influenced by their socioeconomic background, including parental education, income, and migration status, both at the regional and individual levels (Lauri & Põder, 2013; Põder et al., 2013) and studies at the individual level (Schütz et al., 2008). Thus, students' socioeconomic conditions significantly affect both school choice and learning outcomes over time.

Nevertheless, the impact of PPDB on the equitable distribution of educational quality remains widely debated. Some studies highlight its positive effects, while others point to unintended negative consequences. On the positive side, PPDB has been found to improve coordination between schools and education authorities, support more effective resource allocation, and encourage greater institutional accountability (Lestari & Rosdiana, 2018; Suntiana et al., 2022; Pasolong, 2014; Wahab, 2021). Additionally, PPDB has the potential to improve facilities, infrastructure, and learning conditions when accompanied by adequate government support (Haryanti & Dindin, 2020; Lisran, 2016). According to Bakar et al. (2019), the zoning system offers two major benefits: local diversity, which requires students to adapt to their immediate environment, and convenience, as shorter commuting distances increase comfort and a sense of belonging.

Despite these advantages, significant challenges remain. Several studies report that PPDB disadvantages high-achieving students who live outside priority zones, limiting their opportunity to attend their preferred schools (Hani, 2021; Maknuni & Wangid, 2020; Suntiana et al., 2022). This has led to public perceptions of unfairness, as students with lower academic achievement may be admitted based solely on geographic proximity. Additionally, concerns have been raised that the presence of more heterogeneous student populations may affect learning quality in certain schools (Raharjo, 2021).

Field monitoring has also identified persistent problems related to school readiness, including insufficient teacher preparation, curriculum adaptation, management capacity, infrastructure, and learning resources (Ariani, 2021; Lufri & Yogica, 2019). The zoning system, which does not prioritize academic scores, has been associated with declining average UN scores and reduced motivation among some students (Perdana, 2019; Wahyuni, 2019; Ula & Lestari, 2020; Purwanti, et al., 2019).

Moreover, the system has created opportunities for manipulation, such as renting housing near a preferred school, falsifying addresses, or sending children to live temporarily with relatives within a school's zone (Aksa et al., 2019; Hasanah, 2020; Noreisch, 2007; Purwanti, et al., 2019). As a result, schools that were previously considered "elite" must now accept a more heterogeneous student body and collaborate more closely with other educational institutions, as they can no longer selectively admit students based on academic performance alone (Suntiana et al., 2022).

Comparable Student Admission Policies in Other Countries

Several countries around the world have implemented zoning systems in their student admission processes. Estonia, Finland, and Sweden illustrate that zoning policies have a significant positive impact on equalizing student learning quality because socioeconomic status does not advantage or disadvantage specific groups of students (Põder et al., 2017).

In Finland, the zoning system operates through an integrated electronic system linking general and vocational secondary education. Each student may choose up to five schools or five fields of study, and students may live in dormitories if their commute to school exceeds three hours (Broberg & Sarjala, 2015; Kallio et al., 2016). In Berlin, Germany, parents' decisions substantially influence school choice, and zoning receives relatively little attention (Noreisch, 2007; Tian & Sun, 2018). Meanwhile, in the Atlanta metropolitan area and several U.S. regions, parents are willing to relocate to access higher-quality schools despite high housing costs, enabling their children to attend nearby schools (Andreyeva & Patrick, 2017; Machin & Salvanes, 2016; Phan, 2015; Saporito, 2017; Cookson Jr. et al., 2018; Pierce, 2008). In England, the zoning system—known as the catchment area —applies to public primary and secondary schools (ages 5-16). If a school still has open seats, it is required to admit students without restrictions. Every child is guaranteed admission to a public school, and if available seats are insufficient, placement decisions are made by the local authority or school governing board, depending on school regulations (Nugraha, 2019).

PPDB-like practices also exist in parts of Asia and Australia. In China, zoning is based on residential proximity to schools. At the primary level, there is no discriminatory practice such as allocating high-achieving students across secondary schools to equalize achievement (Deng & Zhao, 2014; Liu et al., 2020). Research by Yang et al. (2018) and Feng (2013) shows that socioeconomic background—proxied housing value—influences access to top schools. In Japan, a zoning system called Tsuugaku-kuiki (school catchment area) is implemented for elementary and junior high schools. Schools are established in each district, including remote areas with small populations. This approach not only supports zoning but also fosters children's character development by allowing them to walk to school with peers, thereby strengthening social awareness, interaction skills, cooperation, and discipline (Akabayashi, 2006). Australia—one of Indonesia's closest neighbors—also employs a zoning or catchment system (local neighborhood zones) based on distance between a student's home and the nearest school. Distance calculations consider several factors, including geography, main roads, rivers, and parks, to minimize children's travel time (Jacobs et al., 2021; Rowe & Lubienski, 2017).

Research Aims and Hypotheses

The study aims to assess whether the New Student Admission (PPDB) policy has achieved its primary objective of promoting equitable access to quality education. The research questions are:

1. Has the mobility of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to public schools increased following PPDB implementation?
2. Have learning outcomes become more evenly distributed following PPDB implementation?
3. Have students' transportation costs to school decreased following PPDB implementation?
4. Has the number of students with disabilities attending public schools increased following PPDB implementation?

The hypotheses are:

1. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds experience increased mobility into public schools because PPDB zoning and affirmative pathways expand access to public education that was previously limited.
2. Gaps in learning outcomes between schools decrease after PPDB implementation because zoning promotes more equitable student distribution in terms of aptitude and socioeconomic status. Consequently, educational disparities diminish, and school quality becomes more uniform. As student bodies become more diverse, schools are encouraged to improve their instructional strategies.
3. PPDB reduces transportation costs because zoning decreases the distance between home and school. Transportation is a significant household expense, and PPDB makes education more affordable, especially for lower-income families.
4. PPDB's affirmative pathway for students with disabilities increases their enrollment in public schools by providing a dedicated admission route separate from other pathways.

One motivation for this study stems from national discussions on PPDB and inconsistencies across previous research. This study employs quantitative methods, drawing on the 2015–2021 National Socio-Economic Survey (Susenas) and 2015–2019 National Examination (UN) scores to evaluate five indicators: the number of low-SES students in public schools, transportation costs, gaps in learning outcomes, the number of with disabilities in public schools, and the quality of meaningful learning. This constitutes the study's advantage over prior works.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach (Kaliyadan & Kulkarni, 2019) with two large secondary data sources: Susenas education modules for 2015 and 2021 and school-level National Examination data for 2015–2019. Susenas data measure the mobility of low-SES students to public schools, transportation costs, and participation of students with disabilities. Susenas time-series data enable year-to-year comparisons. National Examination (UN) data measure learning outcomes. UN data are available only until 2019 due to the transition to the National Assessment (AN). AN data cannot be used because they are inaccessible and available only for 2021–2023, making them unsuitable for comparisons before and after PPDB.

The study sample includes school-age children from elementary school (SD) to high school/vocational school (SMA/SMK). Data analysis employs descriptive statistics to summarize patterns and trends across key indicators (Kaliyadan & Kukarni, 2019). The analysis compares data from 2015 with the latest available datasets (2021 for Susenas; 2019 for UN), highlighting changes across four main indicators.

Table 2 Operational Definitions of Variables

Variables	Description and Units	Data Source
Mobility of underprivileged students	Number of poor children enrolled in public and private schools	Susenas
Transportation costs	Average annual transportation cost to travel to school	Susenas
Gaps in learning outcomes and learning quality	Differences in learning achievement (National Exam [UN] scores)	National Exam (UN) Scores
Participation of students with disabilities	Number of students with disabilities in public and special schools	Susenas

Source: Research Primary Data

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Data analysis addressing the four dimensions of educational equity reveals the following:

1. The percentage of low-SES students attending public schools increased after PPDB.
2. The average daily transportation costs for students decreased.
3. Learning outcome gaps, as measured by UN scores, remained substantial in 2015 but narrowed by 2019.
4. The number of students with disabilities in general schools slightly decreased, while enrollment increased in special schools.

1. Increased Mobility of low-SES Students to Public Schools

The percentage of low-SES students in public schools increased from 7.9% in 2015 to 16.4% in 2021. All school levels experienced growth, with the largest increase observed at the junior high school level (23%).

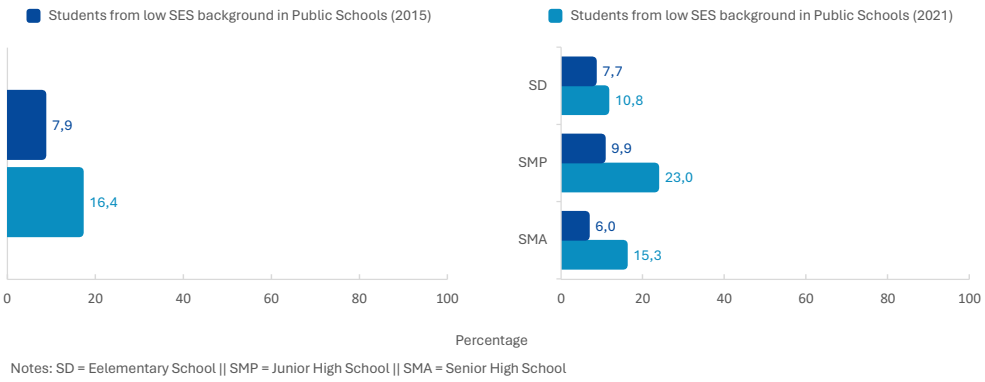

Figure 1 Percentage of Students from Low Socioeconomic Backgrounds in Public Schools Overall (Left) and by Level (Right)
Source: STATA 17.0 Output, Susenas, 2015 & 2021

2. Decreasing Learning Outcome Gaps

UN data show that score disparities remain large nationwide and across school types (junior high, senior high, vocational).

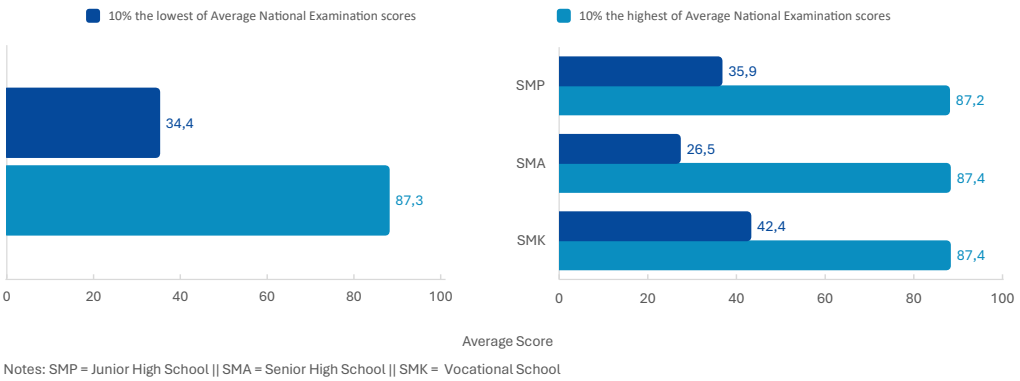

Figure 2 Highest and Lowest National Examination Scores in 2015 at the National Level (Left) and by Level (Right)
Source: STATA 17.0 Output, National Examination (UN) Scores, 2015

Comparisons of 2015 and 2019 data reveal that most provinces and regencies experienced declines in the gap between their highest and lowest scores. Unfortunately, the reduction is partly due to declining performance in top schools rather than improvements in low-performing ones.

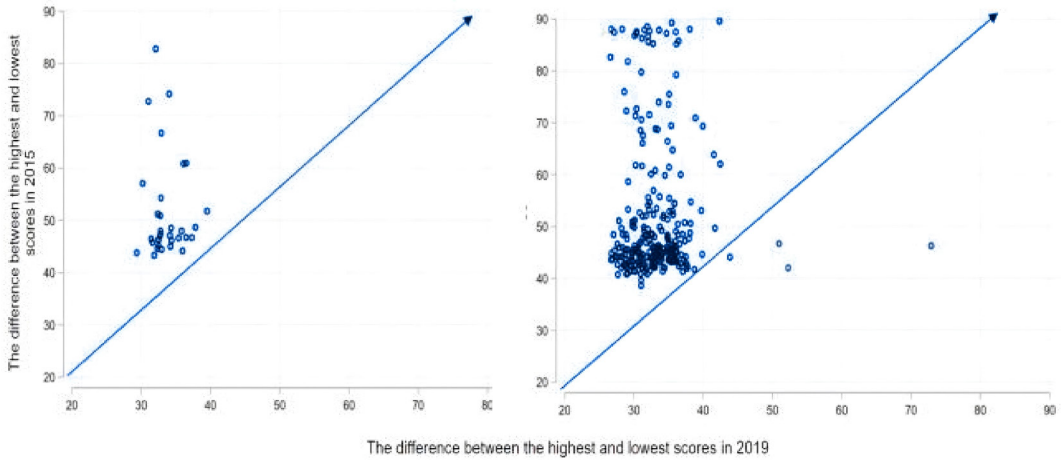

Figure 3 Highest and Lowest National Examination Scores in 2015–2019 at the Provincial (Left) and Regency/City (Right) Levels
Source: STATA 17.0 Output, National Examination (UN) Scores, 2015 & 2019

The analysis indicates that the decline in inequality is attributable to the reduced gap in National Examination averages. This reduction resulted from an increase in the lowest average score and a decrease in the highest average score in 2019. When comparing the average scores of the top 10% of provinces, the data show that all provinces (100%) experienced a reduction in score gaps, although the 2019 gap remained smaller than in 2015. A closer examination reveals that every province experienced a 10% decrease in scores. In fact, the lowest 10% of scores increased in only 9 out of 33 provinces.

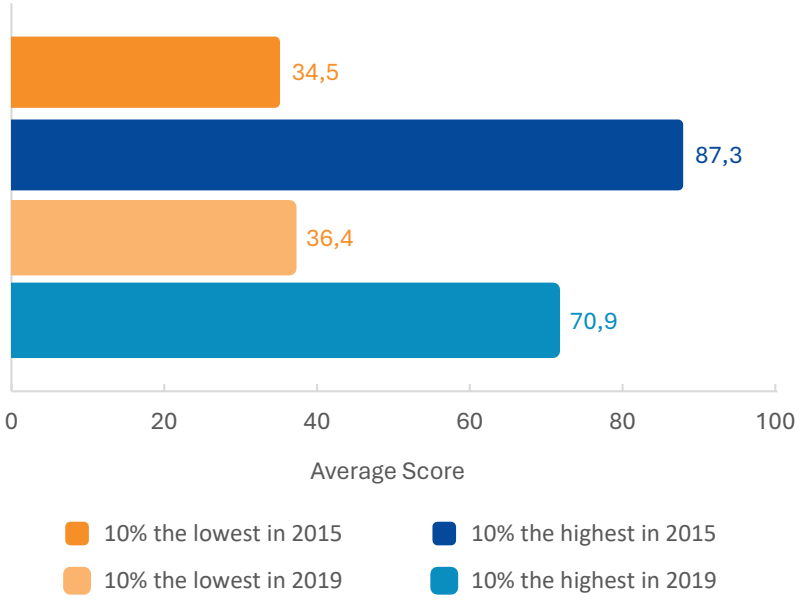

Figure 4 Highest 10% and Lowest 10% of National Examination Averages, 2015-2019
Source: STATA 17.0 output, National Examination (UN) Scores, 2015 & 2019

3. Transportation Costs to School Have Generally Decreased

Average transportation costs to school decreased in 2021 from IDR 5,538 to IDR 4,245. in the decline is also evident across elementary, middle, and high school levels. The data demonstrate that the higher the educational level, the higher the transportation costs, reflecting reduced availability of school facilities at higher levels. However, after PPDB was implemented, transportation costs decreased to IDR 2,143 for elementary schools, IDR 4,631 for middle school schools, and IDR 5,972 for high schools.

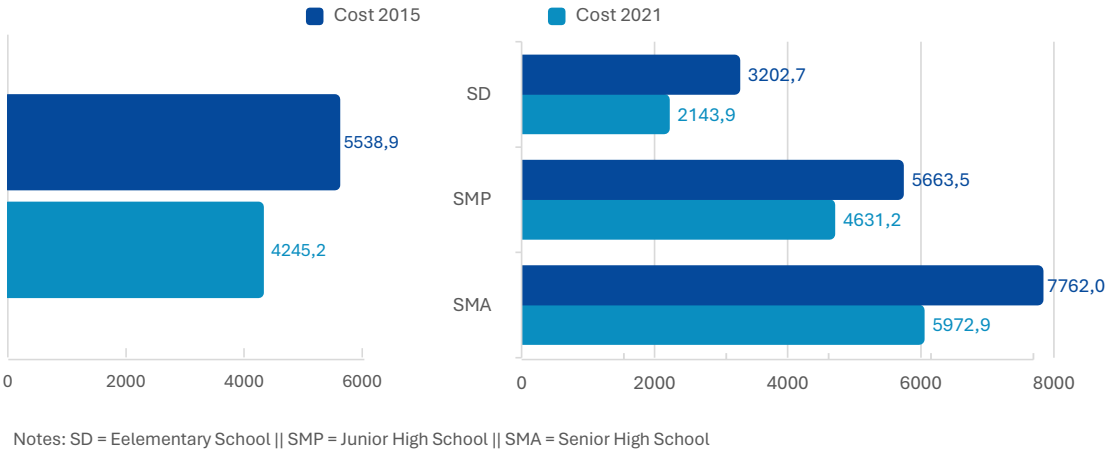

Figure 5 Average Transportation Costs to School Overall (Left) and by Level (Right)
Source: STATA 17.0 output, Susenas, 2015 & 2021

Figure 6 shows that several areas—particularly outside Java—experienced increases in transportation costs, suggesting that PPDB outside the Java region may be unevenly implemented or poorly distributed.

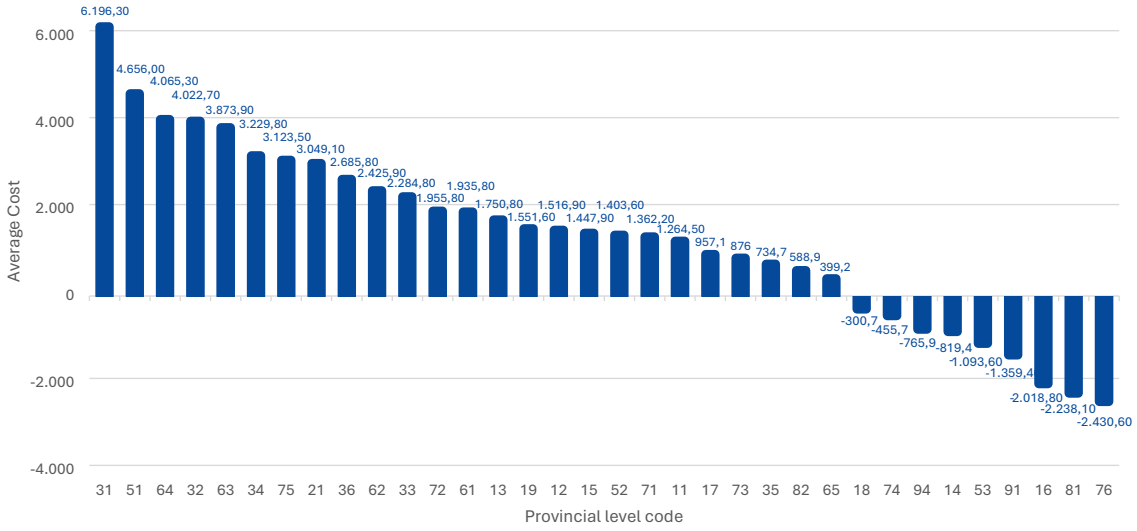

Figure 6 Average Transportation Costs to School at the Provincial Level
Source: STATA 17.0 output, Susenas, 2015 & 2021

4. Access for Students With Disabilities Has Not Improved in Public Schools

In 2018, 69.4% of students with disabilities attended public schools, according to data on the proportion of students with disabilities in education. This high percentage is presumed to result from the lack of assessments or classifications used to determine disability status upon enrollment, particularly in light of the suboptimal performance of Disability Service Units in 2018 (Bakhri et al., 2017; Sukadari et al., 2020). After PPDB was implemented, the proportion of students with disabilities in general schools decreased from 69.4% to 68%, while enrollment in special schools increased from 6% to 8%.

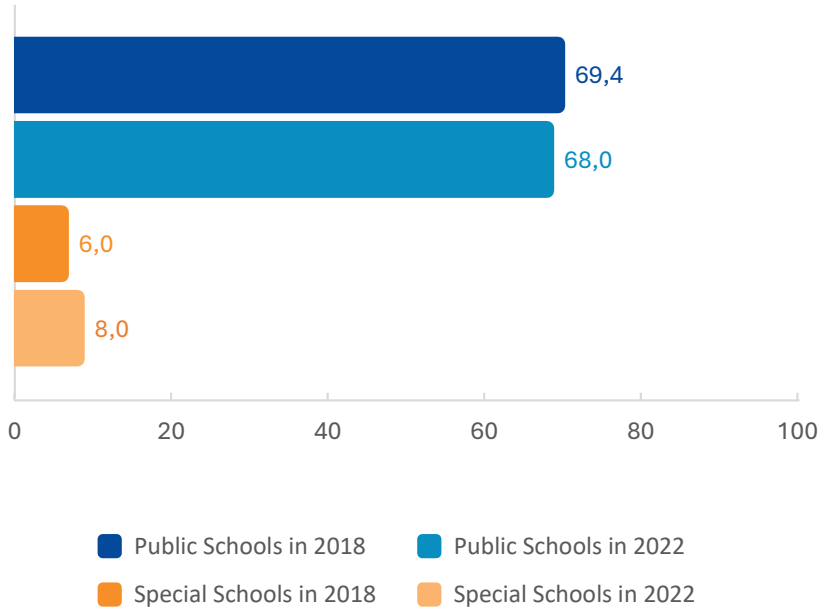

Figure 7 Percentage of Students with Disabilities in Public and Special Schools (2018–2022)
Source: STATA 17.0 output, Susenas, 2018 & 2022

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that the implementation of the PPDB zoning policy has contributed to a more equitable distribution of educational opportunities in Indonesia, although outcomes vary across dimensions and regions. The following discussion interprets these results in relation to the research objectives and existing literature.

1. Socioeconomic Inclusivity and Student Mobility

The increase in the proportion of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds in public schools reflects progress toward broader inclusivity in educational access. The zoning mechanism effectively reduced entry barriers that previously favored families with stronger economic or academic resources. This aligns with Paramartha et al. (2020), who argued that PPDB improved equity in access to education services. Proximity-based admissions further strengthen students' sense of belonging and social cohesion within neighborhoods (Bakar et al., 2019). However, outcomes remain uneven across regions due to limited school capacity and local disparities, emphasizing the need for local adaptation and robust monitoring systems.

2. Learning Outcome Disparities and Quality Compression

The reduction in gaps in National Examination (UN) scores indicates more balanced student distribution following PPDB. The disappearance of "favorite schools" as clusters of high achievers demonstrates progress in equalizing learning environments (Lestari & Rosdiana, 2018; Hani, 2021). Yet, the data reveal that this equalization was achieved not only by improving low-performing schools but also by declining performance in top schools. This "quality compression" raises concerns about academic excellence and motivation among high-achieving students (Perdana, 2019; Raharjo, 2021). Factors such as classroom heterogeneity and uneven teacher readiness may contribute to this pattern. Thus, while PPDB fosters equity, it also necessitates supplemental measures to sustain and enhance learning quality.

3. Decline in Transportation Costs and Localized Access

The decline in transportation costs highlights one practical benefit of PPDB: improved proximity between students' homes and schools. This aligns with the policy's aim of ensuring students attend nearby schools, thereby reducing household financial burdens. Mutiani and Subiyakto (2019) note that lower transportation costs can improve family welfare by freeing resources for other needs. Shorter commuting distances also contribute to environmental sustainability through reduced emissions (Wilson et al., 2007; Sims et al., 2014). Nonetheless, increases in several provinces—especially outside Java—underscore continuing infrastructural challenges, such as low school density, inadequate public transportation, and school consolidations (Vincent et al., 2014).

4. Limited Progress in Disability Inclusion

In contrast to socioeconomic inclusion, progress for students with disabilities remains limited. The slight decline in their representation in public schools after PPDB suggests that mainstream schools have not significantly improved accessibility and readiness. This finding is consistent with Efendi et al. (2022) and Sunardi et al. (2011), who highlight the lack of facilities, trained teachers, and adaptive learning environments as major barriers to inclusive education. The increase in enrollment in special schools may reflect greater parental awareness but also persistent reluctance among general schools to accept students with disabilities. Although PPDB includes affirmative pathways, these have yet to yield substantial progress.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study evaluated whether the *Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru* (PPDB) policy has fulfilled its primary objective of promoting more equitable access to education in Indonesia. PPDB was introduced as a policy response to persistent inequalities in student admissions, particularly the concentration of students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds in public schools widely perceived as higher performing. By shifting admission mechanisms away from academic selection toward proximity-based zoning and affirmative pathways, PPDB represents a fundamental reorientation of education policy toward equity.

The findings indicate that PPDB has expanded access to public schools for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. After implementation, the proportion of low-SES students enrolled in public schools increased across all levels of education, with particularly notable gains at the junior secondary level. This shift suggests that PPDB reduced barriers that had previously restricted access for economically disadvantaged households, including academic cutoffs and indirect costs associated with attending preferred schools located far from home. By prioritizing geographic proximity and providing affirmative admission pathways, PPDB reduced the role of academic-based selection mechanisms that previously shaped access to public schools. As a result, enrollment patterns became less strongly associated with household socioeconomic resources alone. These findings demonstrate that PPDB has contributed to a more inclusive admissions system, particularly in terms of who is able to enter public education.

Beyond access, the study also examined whether PPDB influenced the distribution of learning outcomes across schools. Analysis of National Examination scores shows that disparities between high- and low-performing regions declined between 2015 and 2019. This narrowing of gaps indicates that student achievement became more evenly distributed following PPDB implementation. However, a closer examination reveals that this convergence was not driven solely by improvements among lower-performing schools. Instead, it was partly associated with declining performance in schools that had previously demonstrated high academic achievement. This pattern reflects a form of convergence in learning outcomes, often described as quality compression, in which inequality is reduced without uniform improvement across the system. While PPDB appears effective in reducing disparities between schools, these results highlight a key policy challenge: equity-oriented admission reforms do not automatically translate into overall improvements in learning quality and may create new demands on schools that were previously accustomed to more academically homogeneous student populations.

The findings related to transportation costs provide further insight into the broader implications of PPDB. By allocating students to schools closer to their place of residence, PPDB has reduced transportation-related expenses for households. Transportation costs represent a significant share of education-related expenditures, particularly for low-income families. The observed decline in average transportation costs following PPDB implementation indicates that zoning-based admissions have reduced one important cost-related barrier to school access. This outcome highlights the practical benefits of PPDB beyond enrollment statistics, as reduced commuting distances can improve daily school attendance and ease financial pressures on households. At the same time, the persistence of regional variation in transportation cost trends suggests that the effectiveness of this mechanism depends on contextual factors such as school density, infrastructure, and local implementation capacity. In regions with limited school availability or challenging geography, the benefits of zoning may be less pronounced.

In contrast to the progress observed in socioeconomic access and transportation costs, PPDB has had limited impact on improving access for students with disabilities in public schools. Although the policy includes affirmative pathways intended to support students with special needs, the findings show only modest changes in their participation in mainstream schools. This limitation reflects structural constraints rather than policy intent. Many public schools remain insufficiently prepared to accommodate students with disabilities due to inadequate facilities, limited availability of trained educators, and a lack of adaptive learning environments. As a result, admission reform alone has proven insufficient to substantially expand inclusive education. These findings underscore the importance of

distinguishing between formal access and meaningful participation. While PPDB may open the door to public schools, inclusion requires schools to be capable of responding to diverse learning needs.

Taken together, the results suggest that PPDB has been effective in promoting equity in access but less effective in ensuring equity in learning quality and disability inclusion. The policy has reshaped who enters public schools, yet it has not fully addressed how schools respond to more diverse student populations. PPDB should therefore be understood as a necessary but insufficient condition for achieving equitable and high-quality education. Admission reform can correct imbalances in access, but it must be complemented by policies that strengthen school capacity and instructional quality if equity gains are to be sustained.

Based on these conclusions, several policy recommendations can be drawn. The core objectives of the PPDB policy should be maintained, as the evidence shows that PPDB has played an important role in expanding access to public education and reducing cost-related barriers, particularly for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Weakening zoning and affirmative pathways would risk reversing these gains. However, maintaining PPDB should not be interpreted as preserving the policy without adjustment. Continuous refinement is required to address implementation challenges, regional disparities, and emerging trade-offs between equity and learning quality. In this context, PPDB should be complemented by measures that strengthen learning quality, particularly in schools that now serve more heterogeneous student populations. Investments in school infrastructure, teacher professional development, and digital learning systems are essential to support instructional adaptation and prevent declines in academic performance, especially in formerly high-performing schools.

In addition, disability inclusion should be addressed as a distinct policy priority rather than treated as a secondary outcome of admission reform. While affirmative admission pathways are necessary, they must be accompanied by substantial investments in inclusive education, including improved household awareness, stronger government readiness at both central and local levels, and the provision of inclusive facilities, curricula, and trained educators. At the same time, both central and regional governments should focus on strengthening instructional capacity across all schools. Teachers play a critical role in translating equity-oriented policies into effective learning experiences and therefore require support in adopting differentiated instruction, contextual curricula, and deeper learning approaches. Strengthening school leadership and local education management is equally important to ensure that schools have the capacity to respond to diverse student needs while remaining aligned with national equity objectives.

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