

# Innovative Strategies for Optimizing New Student Admissions in Madrasah Aliyah

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze and discuss strategies and innovations in the New Student Admissions (PPDB) System at MAN IC OKI. This type of research is field research with a qualitative approach. Data collection methods use observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation to observe the implementation process, and interviews by asking questions related to policies, rules, and implementation, while documentation is to analyze various documents such as requirements and brochures. Data analysis methods use data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Research findings indicate that the strategies and innovations implemented successfully enhance the efficiency of the selection process and the quality of students admitted. Evaluation of these strategies shows a significant increase in the number of applicants and students admitted annually, as well as an improved public trust in the transparency and objectivity of the student admission system at the madrasah. Overall, MAN IC OKI has modernized the PPDB system through holistic and innovative strategies, ensuring that admitted students not only possess high academic quality but are also prepared to face challenges in the modern world. By continuing to develop these strategies, the school can further contribute to enhancing education in Indonesia through admitting highly competitive and character-driven students. The efficient and transparent admission of new students is crucial for maintaining the educational standards and reputation of institutions.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

New Student Admissions (PPDB) is part of the selection process for prospective new students, which has been determined by the relevant educational institution. Schools will usually promote to related institutions when accepting new students to show the quality of the school. In addition, state educational institutions are required to have higher quality and competitiveness standards compared to other educational institutions, especially those with the status of superior schools. The PPDB agenda

will develop various strategies and innovations to keep up with the times, although PPDB are only an annual routine agenda (Efferi, 2019).

Every problem that arises during the process of marketing educational services requires a high-quality marketing strategy. The success of an institution can be seen from the quality of the educational service marketing strategy that is appropriate for the institution. In other words, educational service marketing methods can help improve the reputation of educational institutions. In addition, the right time to market educational services is when accepting new students. So far, research on educational service marketing strategies in new student admission activities has only focused on competition between institutions and educational service marketing strategies that are often used only for promotion (Fauzi, 2020).

Student recruitment in a school is essentially a process of searching, determining and attracting applicants who are capable of becoming students in the relevant educational institution. The fundamental thing in PPDB in terms of quantity is the fulfillment of the quota of new students according to the available capacity. While in terms of quality, it is momentum to recruit prospective students who have good intelligence potential and are qualified in the fields of academics, personality, faith and piety, so that it will have implications for the quality of the process and the quality of educational outcomes (Haryata, 2022).

Every school is formed with the aim of creating quality or qualified human resources. Of course this is not an easy job and does not pay attention to the rules of its implementation. Quality is not an attribute of a product or service, but something that is considered to come from the product or service (Sallis, 2015). Many children have ideal dreams of what they want to be when they grow up (Santrock, 2012). One way principals influence student success in schools is by building, encouraging and maintaining focus on school goals and overall student achievement.

One of the vital things in student management is management consisting of new student planning, coaching and graduates in accordance with national education standards. An interesting phenomenon in student management is the planning of new students at the beginning of each new school year or what is known as PSB. The acceptance of new students has become an important agenda in the National Education work calendar and the education calendar because this process is the first screening of prospective students who will enter the school. The challenge of getting quality input through recruitment that takes place during the PPDB requires a mature and gradual planning system and serious attention from all school components so that the desired goals are achieved (Sujari, 2022).

MAN IC OKI faces several challenges in the New Student Admission (PPDB) process. One major challenge is the increasing number of applicants each year, which has grown from 250 in 2015-2016 to 1856 in 2022-2023. This significant rise creates challenges in managing the administrative and selection processes. Additionally, the limited capacity of dormitories and facilities presents difficulties in accommodating all qualified applicants without compromising educational quality. Competition with other schools, especially in attracting high-achieving students from various regions, also adds to the complexity.

To address these challenges, MAN IC OKI has introduced several innovations in its PPDB process. One such innovation is the implementation of two admission pathways: the achievement-based and test-based methods. The achievement pathway is designed to attract students with outstanding academic and non-academic achievements, while the test-based pathway evaluates students through administrative selection, written tests, and interviews. Furthermore, digital innovations, such as online registration and announcements, have been introduced to reach prospective students more widely and efficiently.

These innovations are supported by a digital marketing strategy that utilizes social media, websites, and print publications to promote MAN IC OKI. This strategy aligns with modern management theory, which includes commanding, motivating, coordinating, and communicating. Commanding is performed by the head of the madrasah, who sets the vision and mission for PPDB, motivating is realized through awards for high-achieving students. Coordinating involves

collaboration between teachers, staff, and the madrasah committee, and communicating is done through effective use of social media and promotional tools to spread information to the public.

MAN IC OKI has unique policies in the implementation and organization of student activities, with boarding organization and language activities, which are different from other MAN ICs in Indonesia, which generally only have OSIS. In this article, the main focus is to analyze in-depth the strategies and innovations in the PPDB system implemented at MAN IC OKI. Therefore, MAN IC OKI, as one of the leading madrasahs in Indonesia, has successfully increased the number of students admitted each year.

In analyzing previous research findings (2019-2023) related to the New Student Admissions (PPDB) system, several important trends emerge that highlight common challenges and innovations in the context of educational institutions, particularly Islamic schools like MAN IC OKI. Wulandari (2022) emphasizes the growing role of digital marketing and media in promoting PPDB. Schools are increasingly leveraging websites, social media, and online platforms to boost awareness and engage potential students. This aligns with MAN IC OKI's efforts to use online releases and digital campaigns to enhance its admissions process. Sari et al. (2023) and others highlight the role of the zoning system in regulating PPDB in public schools, ensuring equitable access across regions. Although zoning doesn't directly apply to MAN IC OKI, the institution faces a similar challenge of attracting students from diverse regions while adhering to Ministry of Religious Affairs policies. Setyaningsih et al. (2019), which analyzed educational innovation in Islamic institutions. They found that adapting e-learning platforms was a key response to challenges posed by the digital era. This innovation followed four steps: invention, development, diffusion, and adaptation, aligning with efforts to modernize and stay competitive.

While previous studies have often focused on zoning policies and general digital implementation in admissions, the specific case of MAN IC OKI offers a distinct context. As a top-tier Islamic institution, it uniquely balances religious education with modern pedagogical strategies, a factor not as prominent in other PPDB studies. Moreover, its specific regional outreach, student boarding programs, and dual admission pathways provide a unique model that sets it apart from mainstream educational institutions and calls for a tailored analysis of its PPDB strategy. This article aims to provide a more detailed overview of the processes, challenges, and innovations undertaken by MAN IC OKI in implementing the PPDB system.

## 2. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative methodology approach aimed at understanding and interpreting the meanings, characteristics, concepts, symbols, and phenomena related to the new student admission system at Insan Cendekia Ogan Komering Ilir State Islamic Senior High School. The research was conducted at Insan Cendekia Ogan Komering Ilir State Islamic Senior High School, located at Jl. Insan Cendekia, Seriguna, Kec. Teluk Gelam, Ogan Komering Ilir, starting around January 2024, coinciding with the new student admission period at the school. The researcher serves as the primary instrument in data collection, conducting direct observations and field explorations to gather in-depth information on the implementation of the admission system and its impact on the quality of graduates.

In this study, various data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, and documentation, were used to gain a comprehensive insight into the implementation of the system. Observation is used to collect data related to the implementation of the PPDB system, interviews by asking questions related to policies, rules, and implementation of the PPDB system, while documentation by analyzing various documents related to the PPDB system. With the purposive sampling technique, the informants in the study were the principal, teachers, and employees of MAN IC OKI who were directly involved in PPDB activities.

The data analysis model used in this study is based on the procedures proposed by Miles and Huberman through the following steps: 1) data collection by observation, in-depth interviews and documentation or a combination of the three (triangulation). In the initial stage, researchers conduct general exploration of the social situation/object being studied; 2) Data reduction, a process of research,

abstraction, concentration, attention to simplification, and transformation of "rough" data that emerges from researchers' written notes in the field; 3) Data presentation, in qualitative research data presentation is done in the form of tables, graphs, pie charts, pictograms and the like; and 4) Verification, namely the conclusion of the activity of formulating based on the two previous activities. This conclusion can be a temporary conclusion or a final conclusion.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. PPDB Implementation System at MAN IC OKI

##### 3.1.1. Commanding

During the PPDB implementation process at MAN IC OKI, the madrasah, including the head of the madrasah and the PPDB committee, play an important role in providing direction and instructions to prospective students and parents. The following are the general stages and how they provide direction and instructions:

First, announcement of the opening of registration. The head of the madrasah or the PPDB committee announces the opening of registration through various channels, such as the website, social media, and bulletin boards at the madrasah. This announcement includes important information such as the registration schedule, requirements, and registration procedures.

Second, socialization and initial information. The head of the madrasah or the committee held a socialization session both in person and online. In this session, they explained the madrasah program in detail, the advantages of MAN IC OKI, and the PPDB process. They also answer questions from prospective students and parents to ensure that all information is clear and understood.

Third, applicant criteria. In the implementation of PPDB at MAN IC OKI, there is a quota that is accepted and requirements or criteria that must be met by applicants who become prospective students at MAN IC OKI, these requirements are explained by MAN IC OKI on the web, social media and even during direct socialization.

Fourth, Registration Instructions. The admissions committee provides detailed registration guidelines, including what documents need to be prepared, how to fill out the registration form, and the registration deadline. This guide is usually available on the madrasah website or provided in the form of a brochure.

Fifth, the implementation of the selection. The head of the madrasah and the committee explain the stages of the selection, which can include two paths, namely the achievement path and the test path. They provide instructions on the location and time of the test, as well as the equipment that must be brought by prospective students.

The implementation of the selection at MAN IC OKI is carried out through two channels, namely the CBT test channel and the achievement channel. Information about the test is disseminated through social media such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, brochures, and direct socialization. The selection is carried out in seven locations with two types of tests: psychological tests and academic tests, which are scheduled from February 20 to March 30, 2024. This approach shows the use of various communication channels to ensure prospective participants get complete and timely information.

PPDB at MAN IC OKI has determined seven locations for the implementation of the regular selection test or CBT. These locations include MAN IC OKI itself, as well as several madrasahs in the surrounding area, namely MAN 3 Palembang, MAN 2 Lubuklinggau, MAN 1 OKU, MAN 1 Lahat, MTsN 2 Palembang, and MTsN 1 MUBA. The decision to choose these locations shows an effort to provide easier access for prospective participants from various regions to take the selection test.

The implementation of the SNPDB CBT test at MTS Negeri 2 went smoothly under the supervision of the South Sumatra Ministry of Religion Regional Office official, Dr. H. Syafitri Irwan, who opened the event and gave a speech. He emphasized the importance of honesty and integrity in the selection process, with graduation determined absolutely based on test results to prevent fraud. After the briefing, test participants were immediately directed to the examination room in accordance with the established rules, ensuring that the selection process runs according to the provisions.

Seventh, the announcement of the selection results. After the selection is complete, the results are announced by the head of the madrasah or the admissions committee via the website or other media that have been determined. They also provide instructions on the next steps for those who pass, including the re-registration schedule and additional administrative requirements.

After the test and achievement pathway selection process was completed on March 20, 2024, the graduation announcement was made. Participants who pass are directed to re-register and complete the administrative files via the MAN IC OKI website and official Instagram. This approach shows the use of technology to facilitate the administrative process, increase efficiency, and ensure accessibility for participants who pass.

Thus, the implementation system for PPDB (PPDB) or the National Selection of New Students (SNPDB) at MAN IC OKI when viewed from the Commanding aspect has been running well. These stages are the announcement of the opening of registration, socialization and initial information, applicant criteria, registration instructions, implementation of the selection test, and announcement of the selection results. Through these stages, MAN IC OKI ensures that the new student admission process runs smoothly and transparently, and that all prospective students and parents receive the information they need to follow the process properly.

The PPDB implementation system at MAN IC OKI explained in the statement above shows that the stages implemented are in accordance with the basic principles of transparency and efficiency. Transparency in the context of PPDB refers to the openness of information available to prospective students and parents regarding the selection process and the criteria used. Clear and accessible information reduces uncertainty and increases public trust in the process (Jain & Sharma, 2016). Transparency in the admission process can increase the satisfaction and trust of parents and prospective students in the education system. This study shows that clear announcements of applicant criteria, registration instructions, and selection results help reduce unfairness and potential conflict (Khan & Ali, 2023).

Efficiency in PPDB refers to how well the process manages time, resources, and costs while achieving the desired results. The admissions system must be able to process data quickly and accurately without burdening students and administration (Murray & Nielsen, 2018). Structured and systematic stages in PPDB, such as the implementation of selection tests and announcement of selection results, can increase efficiency by minimizing disruption and optimizing the administrative process. In addition, the use of information technology in registration and selection can speed up the process and reduce errors (Lubienski, 2021).

### 3.1.2. Motivating

MAN IC OKI uses various strategies to motivate prospective students to be interested in registering and participating in the selection process. Here are some common approaches:

First, promoting the excellence of the madrasah. Highlighting the academic achievements that have been achieved by MAN IC OKI students in various regional, national, and international competitions. Showing success in non-academic fields such as sports, arts, and other extracurricular activities.

The acceptance of new students at this madrasah attracts many enthusiasts because of the achievements of students and alumni who excel. The committee always appreciates every achievement in various ways, including posting congratulations on social media. The goal is to motivate and inspire other MAN IC students and prospective students who will register, creating an environment that fosters a spirit of achievement and high achievement. Showing success stories of alumni who have achieved success in education, career, or other fields, shows how education at MAN IC OKI has helped them achieve their goals.

MAN IC OKI provides facilities to help students achieve academic and non-academic achievement targets, including being accepted at quality universities both domestically and abroad. In 2023, as many as 96% of MAN IC OKI graduates were accepted into various favorite universities, and this information was published through social media and brochures to highlight the excellence of MAN IC OKI students'

achievements. This approach aims to improve the reputation of the madrasah and provide motivation for prospective students.

Second, superior programs and facilities. Explaining the superior curriculum that combines general and religious education with a modern approach, as well as an emphasis on character development. Presenting complete and modern school facilities, such as laboratories, libraries, sports facilities, dormitories, and a conducive learning environment.

Third, socialization and education. Holding webinars, seminars, and presentations at schools of origin of prospective students to provide information and answer their questions. Using social media, official websites, and other communication platforms to reach a wider audience and provide the latest information on the registration and selection process.

Thus, the implementation system of PPDB (PPDB) or New Student National Selection (SNPDB) at MAN IC OKI when viewed from the Motivating aspect, MAN IC OKI provides motivation through encouragement to prospective students by sharing information related to excellence, adequate facilities, achievements achieved by MAN IC OKI itself or its students. Through these strategies, MAN IC OKI strives to build a positive image and attract the interest of prospective students by showing the benefits and opportunities they can get by going to school there. This is expected to motivate them to register and participate in the selection process with high enthusiasm.

Abraham Maslow (1943) stated that individual motivation is influenced by the fulfillment of hierarchical needs, starting from basic needs to self-actualization needs (Setyowati & Yahya, 2023). In the context of education, information about facilities and achievements can fulfill the needs of individuals to achieve self-actualization and feel appreciated. By providing information about advantages and facilities, MAN IC OKI seeks to fulfill the needs of prospective students to feel appreciated and accomplished, which in turn can increase their motivation to register.

### 3.1.3. Coordinating

Good coordination between members of the admissions committee and other related parties is very important to ensure the smooth running of the PPDB process at MAN IC OKI. Here are some ways in which coordination is carried out:

First, the formation of the committee structure. The principal forms an admissions committee consisting of teachers, administrative staff, and other related parties. Each member of the committee is given clear tasks and responsibilities, such as the registration section, selection section, information and communication section, and finance section.

Second, coordination meetings. The committee holds regular internal meetings to monitor the progress of the admissions process, identify and resolve problems that arise, and ensure that all tasks are running according to plan. This meeting is also used to provide updates on the number of applicants, selection progress, and other important matters.

Third, effective communication. The committee utilizes communication technology such as email, WhatsApp groups, or other communication platforms to coordinate quickly and efficiently. All important information and the latest developments are conveyed through this communication channel to ensure that all committee members remain informed.

Fourth, preparation of schedules and timelines. The committee prepares a detailed schedule and timeline for each stage of the admission process, starting from the announcement of registration, administrative selection, implementation of tests, to the announcement of selection results and re-registration. This schedule is distributed to all committee members and related parties to ensure that all stages run according to plan.

Fifth, monitoring and evaluation. The committee regularly monitors each stage of the admission process to ensure that everything runs according to plan and there are no obstacles that hinder it. Evaluations are carried out after each stage is completed to identify areas that need to be fixed or improved.

Sixth, handling problems and solutions. The committee provides a mechanism for handling

problems or complaints from prospective students and parents, such as help services or contacts that can be contacted. Any problems that arise are handled quickly and effectively to maintain a smooth admission process.

Thus, the implementation system for PPDB (PPDB) or New Student National Selection (SNPDB) at MAN IC OKI when viewed from the Coordinating aspect, the Head of MAN IC OKI forms an implementing committee, consisting of the chief executive and other committees who work on tasks in their respective fields. The chief executive coordinates other committee members by holding meetings with fellow committee members so that communication runs effectively by discussing progress, problems and so on in the process of implementing PPDB at MAN IC OKI. Through these coordination steps, MAN IC OKI ensures that all parties involved in the admission process work harmoniously and effectively, so that the entire process of accepting new students can run smoothly and successfully.

Henry Mintzberg (1979) proposed that coordination within an organization can be achieved through five primary mechanisms: standardization of operations, direct supervision, coordination by results, mutual adjustment, and coordination through communication (Rohmah et al., 2024). According to G.R. Terry (2016), coordination is a synchronized and systematic effort to allocate the appropriate time and provide direct implementation to achieve the desired outcomes in line with the planned objectives. Coordination often involves holding meetings where the leader offers explanations and guidance (Mamik, 2014). In the context of PPDB, coordination through communication and direct supervision ensures that all committee members understand and effectively carry out their responsibilities.

#### 3.1.4. Communicating

The communication process between the school, prospective students, and parents during the admission of new students at MAN Insan Cendekia OKI generally includes several main stages. The following is an explanation of how communication is carried out in each stage:

First, the committee formation meeting. The head of the madrasah holds an internal meeting to form the admissions committee. In this meeting, the duties and responsibilities of each committee member are determined. This meeting also discusses the communication plan and strategy that will be used during the admissions process. Second, the announcement of the opening of registration. The announcement is made through various communication channels, such as the official madrasah website, social media, and bulletin boards in the school environment. The information provided includes the registration schedule, registration requirements, registration procedures, and contacts that can be contacted for further questions. Third, the registration guide. The admissions committee provides a complete registration guide in the form of a written document that can be downloaded from the school website. This guide includes steps for filling out the registration form, a list of documents that must be included, and how to submit registration files. Thus, the implementation system for PPDB (PPDB) or New Student National Selection (SNPDB) at MAN IC OKI when viewed from the Communicating aspect, MAN IC OKI maintains communication both internally and externally regarding important information regarding the implementation system for PPDB at MAN IC OKI. Through these steps, MAN IC OKI ensures that all important information is conveyed clearly and on time, so that the process of implementing PPDB runs smoothly and effectively.

Communicating is one of the most basic activities in human life. Almost all religions understand the need for humans to relate to each other, which has existed since Adam and Eve. Rogers defines communication as a process by which two or more individuals form or communicate knowledge, resulting in deep mutual understanding (Cangara, 2016). Communication in the PPDB implementation system at MAN IC OKI shows that effective communication is the key to the success of the new student admission process. Communication begins with a committee formation meeting that ensures that applicants receive clear and complete information regarding the schedule, requirements, and registration procedures. In addition, the committee provides detailed and easily accessible registration guides, both in the form of brochures that are distributed directly and online documents that are

uploaded on various school social media platforms. Prospective students feel helped by this guide, which makes it easier for them to prepare documents and fill out registration forms. In conclusion, MAN IC OKI has succeeded in maintaining good internal and external communication, ensuring that all important information is conveyed in a timely and clear manner, so that the PPDB process runs smoothly and effectively.

### 3.2. Implications of the PPDB Implementation System at MAN IC OKI on the Quality of Graduates

The system for implementing PPDB at MAN IC OKI has a major influence on the quality of graduates produced. In 2022/2023, out of 92 students, 85 students were accepted into college, which means that 92.39% of students successfully continued their education to a higher level. In 2023/2024, this percentage increased to 96.67%, with 87 out of 90 students accepted into college. The increase in the number of students accepted into college from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024 shows the excellent quality of education and student preparation at MAN IC OKI. As shown in table 1.

**Table 1.** Data on MAN IC OKI students accepted at universities

No	Year	Quantity	Percentage
1.	2022/2023	85	92.39%
2.	2023/2024	87	96.67%

The implications of this analysis for the MAN IC OKI PPDB (PPDB) system are significant. A strict and effective entrance selection system needs to be maintained to ensure that accepted students have the potential that meets the expected standards. The curriculum and coaching programs at MAN IC OKI must also be continuously improved to ensure that students receive optimal preparation for college entrance exams. A strict and competitive selection process ensures that only students with high academic ability and potential are accepted so that students who enter have a strong foundation and high motivation to learn.

In addition to focusing on academics, MAN IC OKI also emphasizes character education and religious values, ensuring that graduates are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have integrity and good character. The competitive and conducive learning environment at MAN IC allows bright and motivated students to encourage each other to excel, creating a strong and positive learning culture.

Coupled with access to quality resources and facilities, as well as support from competent teachers and innovative learning programs, MAN IC students receive a comprehensive and high-quality education. Strong alumni connections and networks provide inspiration and motivation for students, as well as assist graduates in career development and further academic opportunities. Overall, the selective and comprehensive admission system at MAN IC OKI directly contributes to the quality of graduates produced, making them competent, characterful individuals who are ready to compete at the national and international levels.

The quality indicators of MAN IC OKI graduates include various aspects, including faith and piety, noble morals, mastery of Islamic knowledge integrated with science and technology, academic and non-academic achievements, understanding of yellow books and memorizing the Qur'an and hadith, language proficiency, application of scientific principles, skills in information and communication technology, critical, creative, and innovative thinking skills, development of entrepreneurship based on local excellence, empowerment of arts and culture and local wisdom, as well as awareness of nationality, environment, and Islamic moderation. This shows the high standards expected of MAN IC OKI graduates in achieving their full potential.

The implications of the implementation of PPDB at MAN IC OKI show a significant positive impact on the quality of graduates. The quality of students increased after the implementation of PPDB, which was reflected in the improvement in their academic performance. The implementation of PPDB also encourages the development of a better curriculum and increases the availability of school resources, which support the teaching and learning process. There is no negative impact on student

welfare, indicating that the implementation of PPDB is running well without sacrificing student welfare. Overall, the PPDB policy at MAN IC OKI is effective in improving the quality of graduates, which is indicated by an increase in the graduation rate and student abilities in various competencies, both academic and non-academic.

Thus, the strict and selective new student admission system at MAN IC OKI has a significant impact on the quality of graduates produced, with several important implications. The competitive selection process ensures that only students with high academic potential and achievement are accepted, who then receive quality education through a challenging curriculum, optimal facilities, and guidance from competent teachers. The focus on character education and religious values adds an integral dimension in forming graduates who are not only intelligent but also have integrity. A competitive learning environment and the support of a strong alumni network create a positive learning culture and provide inspiration and motivation for students. MAN IC graduate quality indicators include academic and non-academic achievements, the ability to memorize the Qur'an and Hadith, language proficiency, and innovative critical thinking skills, all aimed at producing individuals who are competent, have character, and are ready to compete at the national and international levels.

The implementation of PPDB at MAN IC OKI has significant implications for the quality of graduates produced. Especially from the strict and competitive selection in the PPDB implementation system at MAN IC OKI ensures that only students with high academic ability and potential are accepted. From the statement of Mr. S, who is the chief executive, it is clear that the acceptance rate is only 10% of the number of applicants, showing how selective this process is. This confirms that students who are accepted already have a strong foundation and high motivation to learn, which contributes to the high quality of graduates. This is supported by high academic standards and optimal educational facilities as well as an emphasis on character education and religious values. Access to quality resources and facilities, as well as support from competent teachers and innovative learning programs, ensure that students receive a comprehensive and high-quality education. Strong alumni connections and networks also provide inspiration and motivation for students and help in career development and future academic opportunities.

### **Discussion**

The new student admission system (PPDB) at MAN IC OKI has been designed to maintain a balance between selectivity and inclusivity, yet challenges remain in its implementation. One of the main challenges is the trade-off between maintaining high selectivity standards while being inclusive to prospective students from diverse backgrounds, especially those from areas with limited access to education. In the context of Ogan Komering Ilir, where there are various socio-economic and educational conditions, a PPDB strategy that considers this is very relevant (Annur, 2014). However, the issue of unequal access to education still needs to be addressed. The need to accommodate students from disadvantaged backgrounds may conflict with the need to maintain strict academic standards, thus creating challenges in maintaining this balance.

Moreover, the intense competition within the madrasah environment can place significant pressure on students, especially in preparing for exams and interviews. Students are required to demonstrate strong academic performance as well as good personality and leadership qualities. This is in line with the merit- and potential-based selection approach adopted by the madrasah, which involves various evaluation methods, such as interviews and the assessment of academic and non-academic achievements (Afifuddin & Saebani, 2009). However, this pressure risks affecting students' mental well-being, as they face high expectations in a competitive environment. A balance between academic and non-academic assessments is necessary to ensure that admitted students are not only high-achieving but also capable of thriving in a challenging environment.

The selection strategies at MAN IC OKI also reflect several educational theories, particularly in the holistic approach applied. The emphasis on interviews to assess learning motivation and personal potential is a step in line with holistic education theory, which views students as individuals who need

to develop cognitively, emotionally, and socially (Husen, 2015). Additionally, meritocracy in selection based on academic and non-academic achievements reflects the values present in modern educational systems, although it is important to ensure that meritocracy does not marginalize groups with limited access or opportunities (Holmes, 2021). Therefore, while the strategies adopted by MAN IC OKI align with contemporary educational theories, further refinements are needed to achieve broader inclusivity.

The impact of technological innovation on the admission system at MAN IC OKI has been felt in increased efficiency and transparency of the process. The use of online applications for registration and document submission has reduced administrative burdens, speeding up the process and ensuring better data security (Gunawan & Santoso, 2020). This innovation also affects how students and the madrasah interact in the selection process, where potential- and competence-based evaluations provide a broader perspective on the quality of admitted students. By streamlining administrative processes and reducing operational costs, technology has helped enhance the selection experience for both prospective students and the madrasah itself. However, challenges in adopting this technology may still be related to the digital divide, especially for students living in remote areas with limited internet access. Therefore, additional training for staff and students, as well as better infrastructure, are essential elements to support the smooth implementation of this technology in the future.

The admission system at MAN IC OKI has great potential to be adapted by other educational institutions. Technological innovations and competence-based approaches not only increase efficiency but also provide an example of how transparency and inclusivity can be combined in a fair admission system. This system also demonstrates how educational institutions can use technology to simplify the selection process without compromising the quality of admitted students. The scalability potential of this approach is high, as the methods and technology used are relatively flexible and can be adapted to the needs of various institutions (Sidiq, 2019). In the broader education sector, the success of the PPDB system at MAN IC OKI offers opportunities for other institutions to follow similar steps, with the hope of supporting improved access and quality of education across Indonesia.

The strategies and innovations implemented by MAN IC OKI in their PPDB system have contributed significantly to the efficiency of the selection process and the quality of students accepted. While challenges remain, particularly in terms of pressure on students and the trade-off between selectivity and inclusivity, technological innovations and competency-based selection methods provide a strong example of how admissions systems can continue to be improved to create a more equitable and inclusive educational environment. Furthermore, the success of this system provides an opportunity for other institutions to learn and implement similar strategies, in the hope of driving broader improvements in the education sector.

Overall, the PPDB system at MAN IC OKI has successfully combined holistic selection strategies with technological innovation, which has had a positive impact in terms of both process efficiency and the quality of admitted students. Although challenges remain, particularly regarding student pressure and access inequality, the success of this system provides inspiration for other institutions to adopt similar approaches in enhancing educational quality and equity in access.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study on strategies and innovations in PPDB at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Insan Cendekia Ogan Komering Ilir (MAN IC OKI) shows that the implementation of new technology and selection methods has had a significantly positive impact. The use of online applications for registration has increased the efficiency and accessibility of the admission process, while also reducing the administrative burden on the madrasah. Additionally, competency and potential-based selection methods have ensured that admitted students possess adequate academic abilities and developable potential. The limitation of this study is that it has not been able to prove the positive impact of PPDB innovation in a quantitatively measurable manner. Therefore, the recommendation for further research is the effectiveness and positive impact of PPDB in improving the quality of graduates quantitatively.

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