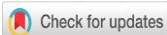


THE STRATEGY OF THE MADRASAH PRINCIPAL IN NEW STUDENT ADMISSIONS (PPDB): A STUDY AT MADRASAH ALIYAH MIFTAHUN NAJAH TANGKIT MUARO JAMBI

Samsu¹, Try Susanti², Tamsir³, Dewi Lestari⁴
1,2,3,4 UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, Indonesia

Email: samsu@uinjambi.ac.id



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the strategies employed by the principal in managing New Student Admissions (PPDB) at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah Tangkit, Sungai Gelam District, Muaro Jambi. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis consisted of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that the principal implemented six main strategies in managing the admission process, namely establishing a PPDB committee, setting student enrollment targets, conducting promotions through social media, distributing brochures and banners, utilizing akhirusanah activities as promotional media, and carrying out evaluations after the admission process. These strategies proved effective, as the number of enrolled students reached 95, exceeding the target of 90 students. The success of the admission process was supported by strong collaboration between the principal and the committee, a positive institutional reputation, community participation, and support from alumni and parents. However, several challenges were identified, including increasing competition among educational institutions, limited facilities and infrastructure, and a shortage of qualified teachers. This study highlights that the principal's strategic leadership, supported by effective organizational communication and community involvement, plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of student admission management in pesantren-based madrasahs.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi kepala madrasah dalam mengelola Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru (PPDB) di Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah Tangkit, Kecamatan Sungai Gelam, Muaro Jambi. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala madrasah menerapkan enam strategi utama dalam pelaksanaan PPDB, yaitu membentuk panitia PPDB, menetapkan target penerimaan siswa, melakukan promosi melalui media sosial, menyebarkan brosur dan spanduk, memanfaatkan kegiatan akhirusanah sebagai media promosi, serta melakukan evaluasi setelah proses PPDB selesai. Strategi tersebut terbukti efektif karena jumlah peserta didik yang diterima mencapai 95 siswa, melebihi target yang ditetapkan sebanyak 90 siswa. Keberhasilan PPDB didukung oleh kerja sama yang baik antara kepala madrasah dan panitia, reputasi lembaga yang positif, partisipasi masyarakat, serta dukungan alumni dan orang tua. Adapun kendala yang dihadapi meliputi persaingan antar lembaga pendidikan, keterbatasan sarana dan prasarana, serta kurangnya tenaga pendidik yang berkualifikasi. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa kepemimpinan strategis kepala madrasah, yang didukung komunikasi organisasi yang efektif dan keterlibatan masyarakat, berperan penting dalam meningkatkan efektivitas pengelolaan PPDB pada madrasah berbasis pesantren.

Kata kunci: Strategi Kepala Madrasah, Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru, Kepemimpinan pendidikan

INTRODUCTION

The New Student Admissions (PPDB) constitute a strategic component of educational institution governance because they are directly related to institutional sustainability, the quality of student input, and school competitiveness amid the increasing competition in education (Hart & Rodgers, 2024; Rumra et al., 2024). The transformation of global educational policies has also encouraged educational institutions to implement admission strategies that are more adaptive, transparent, and responsive to community needs (Ng & Galbraith, 2023). In Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren), PPDB is not merely an administrative process, but also reflects the institutional capacity of madrasahs in attracting public interest and building public trust in the quality of education offered (MY et al., 2025; Marbun, 2025).

The development of educational policies in various countries indicates that competition among educational institutions is becoming increasingly intense, particularly in attracting new students through various educational marketing strategies, strengthening school branding, and improving the quality of academic and non-academic services (Gobby et al., 2026). This phenomenon requires madrasah principals to possess managerial competence, communication skills, and effective leadership strategies in managing new student admissions. The leadership of madrasah principals is closely associated with the effectiveness of decision-making, the development of the madrasah's image, and the enhancement of public trust in educational institutions (Mardi, 2025). In line with this, visionary and quality-oriented leadership has become a key factor in ensuring the successful management of PPDB in a systematic and well-planned manner (Hermawan et al., 2025; Hamdanah et al., 2025). In addition, the success of new student admissions is influenced by the madrasah's ability to build social relationships with the community through effective and participatory organizational communication (Ellington & Prado, 2024).

Madrasah face more complex challenges because they must maintain their Islamic identity while also meeting the demands of modern educational quality (Rumra et al., 2025). Therefore, new student admission strategies are not only related to increasing the number of students, but also concern the institution's ability to build public trust in the quality of Islamic education offered (Yazdani, 2025). In this regard, integrated promotional strategies including social media, alumni networks, and community involvement have proven effective in expanding outreach and increasing the visibility of madrasah within society (Ramadhani & Setyowati, 2023; Sarder & Mustaqeem, 2024).

In addition to the increasing competition among educational institutions, the sustainability of private madrasahs largely depends on their ability to attract and retain students. Failure to achieve student enrollment targets may affect institutional financing, the effectiveness of educational service delivery, teacher allocation, and the long-term sustainability of the institution. From the perspective of educational management, new student admissions are not merely administrative activities but strategic processes that determine the growth, competitiveness, and existence of educational institutions. This issue becomes even more significant in pesantren-based madrasahs that implement an open admission system without academic selection, as these institutions are required to maintain student enrollment while simultaneously ensuring the quality of education provided. Therefore, examining the strategies employed by madrasah principals in managing new student admissions is essential, not only to address the practical challenges faced by Islamic educational institutions but also to enrich the body of knowledge in Islamic education management, particularly in relation to educational leadership and student admission

management within increasingly competitive educational environments.

Previous research conducted by Mardi, (2025), showed that the success of madrasah in attracting public interest is influenced by the quality of madrasah principal leadership, organizational culture, educational innovation, and community involvement in institutional development. Meanwhile, research conducted by McDonald et al., (2019), revealed that the success of madrasah in attracting the community is influenced by communication strategies, media publications, community involvement, and public relations management. Without effective public relations strategies, the image and attractiveness of madrasahs become less optimal.

Nevertheless, previous studies conducted by earlier researchers have focused more on aspects of leadership, public relations management, and madrasah promotional strategies in general. Studies that specifically discuss the strategies of madrasah principals in managing PPDB in pesantren-based madrasahs with an open admission system without academic selection are still relatively limited. Therefore, there is a research gap regarding the leadership strategies of madrasah principals in managing PPDB in pesantren-based madrasahs that implement an open student admission system and operate within a highly competitive educational environment.

Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah Tangkit in Sungai Gelam District, Muaro Jambi, is one of the pesantren-based private madrasahs that continues to strive to maintain its existence amid competition among educational institutions in Jambi City. This madrasah has different characteristics compared to several other educational institutions because it implements an open new student admission system without academic selection tests or certain special requirements. In addition, the location of the madrasah, which is close to other educational institutions, makes the competition to obtain new students increasingly competitive. This condition makes the madrasah principal's PPDB strategy an important variable that determines the sustainability and growth of the institution, while also reflecting the institution's ability to respond adaptively to the dynamics of educational competition.

Based on the description above, this study aims to analyze the strategies of the madrasah principal in managing new student admissions at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah Tangkit in Sungai Gelam District, Muaro Jambi. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic education management studies, particularly regarding the leadership strategies of madrasah principals in managing PPDB. In addition, this study is also expected to serve as a practical reference for Islamic educational institutions in developing new student admission strategies that are effective, adaptive, and aligned with community needs in an era of increasingly complex educational competition.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore and understand the strategies of the madrasah principal in managing PPDB at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah Tangkit in Sungai Gelam District, Muaro Jambi. In accordance with the qualitative research framework proposed by Creswell, (2014), this approach was selected because it is capable of capturing meanings, experiences, and contexts that cannot be measured quantitatively, making it highly relevant for examining leadership and educational institution management phenomena in depth. A case study approach was used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of PPDB management practices within the context of a particular Islamic educational institution.

This study was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah, which is part of

Yayasan Miftahun Najah Tangkit in Sungai Gelam District, Muaro Jambi. The selection of this location was based on the unique characteristics of the madrasah, which implements an open admission system without academic selection, is located within a competitive educational environment, and has a PPDB management system with distinctive features compared to other educational institutions.

Data were collected through method triangulation, which included in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Key informants were selected through purposive sampling and included the madrasah principal, vice principals for student affairs and public relations, teachers, administrative staff, parents of students, and members of the PPDB committee. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow the exploration of emerging themes while ensuring that core issues related to PPDB strategies could be comprehensively addressed. Observations focused on the institution's operational activities during the PPDB process. Secondary data were obtained from institutional documents such as brochures, internal reports, and PPDB committee archives.

Table 1. Research Informants

No.	Informant Category	Role in the Study	Data Obtained
1	Madrasah Principal	Key Informant	PPDB policies, leadership strategies, planning, implementation, and evaluation of PPDB
2	Vice Principal for Student Affairs	Key Informant	Student recruitment activities, enrollment targets, and student management
3	Vice Principal for Public Relations	Key Informant	Promotion strategies, public communication, and community engagement
4	Teachers	Supporting Informants	Participation in PPDB activities and perceptions of admission strategies
5	Administrative Staff	Supporting Informants	Administrative procedures, registration processes, and student data management
6	Parents of Students	Supporting Informants	Reasons for choosing the madrasah and perceptions of institutional quality
7	PPDB Committee Members	Supporting Informants	Technical implementation of PPDB, promotional activities, and challenges encountered

Source: Research Design, 2026.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles & Huberman, (2020), which includes three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation, as well as member checking to ensure that the researcher's interpretations were consistent with the perspectives of the informants.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Madrasah Principal's Strategy in New Student Admissions at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah Tangkit, Sungai Gelam District, Muaro Jambi

In order to ensure that the PPDB activities at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah Tangkit run according to plan, the madrasah principal implemented several planned and structured strategies. This is in line with the view of Tsani Al Haqqi et al., (2024), who emphasized that the success of PPDB management is largely determined by the leadership capacity of the madrasah principal in planning, organizing, and evaluating all stages of the student admission process. The research findings and the strategies implemented are described as follows:

a. Establishing a New Student Admission Committee

Before the implementation of New Student Admissions (PPDB) began, the principal

of Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah first established a special committee responsible for managing all new student admission activities. The formation of this committee was intended to ensure that the PPDB process could run in a more orderly and well-directed manner. The division of responsibilities within the committee made it easier for the madrasah principal to supervise each stage of the ongoing activities. The committee consisted of teachers and educational staff who were assigned duties according to their respective fields, such as registration, administration, publication, and the dissemination of information to the community.

The establishment of a structured PPDB committee represents a management practice that reflects the principles of modern educational administration, in which the effectiveness of program implementation is largely determined by clear roles, division of responsibilities, and effective coordination among all organizational elements (Nurdi & Ahmad, 2025). In addition to carrying out administrative duties, the PPDB committee also plays a role in introducing the madrasah to the community through socialization activities and the dissemination of information, thereby contributing to increasing public interest in enrolling their children in the madrasah.

b. Setting Targets for New Student Admissions

Setting the maximum number of students to be achieved by the PPDB committee was one of the strategies implemented. The principal of Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah Tangkit in Sungai Gelam District, Muaro Jambi, explained that the target to be achieved was 90 students. However, in the current year, the number of students admitted to the madrasah exceeded the target, reaching 95 students.

The establishment of admission targets represents a strategic step that reflects data-driven planning in educational management. According to Rumra et al., (2024), setting realistic and measurable targets provides a clear direction for all organizational components while also serving as an instrument for evaluating the success of the implemented strategies. The achievement of targets beyond the predetermined number indicates that the PPDB strategies implemented were effective and responsive to community needs.

c. Conducting Promotion Through Social Media

Promotion through social media was carried out by creating content and uploading various activities conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah, as well as uploading the achievements of the madrasah and its students on Instagram. The madrasah's Instagram page is available at <https://www.instagram.com/yayasanmiftahunnajah/>. Based on observations of the Instagram account @yayasanmiftahunnajah_ and its connection with the official website of Pondok Pesantren Modern Miftahunnajah, the displayed content is dominated by themes of Islamic education, pesantren activities, da'wah, and the foundation's social publications. In this way, the community can clearly observe the activities carried out at the madrasah, which can attract public interest in pursuing education at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah Tangkit in Sungai Gelam District, Muaro Jambi.

The strategy of promotion through social media is in line with the findings of Ramadhani & Setyowati, (2023), which indicate that active and consistent social media management plays a significant role in building the branding of Islamic educational institutions. Similarly, (Sarder & Mustaqem, 2024), also emphasized that social media is an effective educational marketing instrument for expanding the reach of information and shaping positive public perceptions toward institutions. Content displaying academic activities, student achievements, and the atmosphere of pesantren life has been proven to

increase the trust of prospective students and parents (Marhareita et al., 2022). The following is a summary of the content displayed on the madrasah’s Instagram page as presented in Table 1.1.

Table 2. Forms of Educational Institution Promotion Through the Instagram Social Media Account of Yayasan Miftahunnajah

No	Forms of Social Media Promotion	Examples of Instagram Content	Purpose
1	PPDB Promotion	Registration brochures, schedules, and admission requirements	Attract prospective new students
2	Institutional Branding	Pesantren profile, vision and mission, flagship programs	Build a positive institutional image
3	Documentation of Student Activities	Learning activities, worship, competitions, and extracurricular activities	Increase public trust
4	Achievement Publication	Student and school achievements	Demonstrate educational quality
5	Digital Content Da’wah	Islamic quotes, motivation, short religious studies	Increase engagement and strengthen Islamic identity
6	Facility Publication	Dormitories, classrooms, mosque, pesantren environment	Convince parents and prospective students

Documentation 2025.

d. Conducting Promotion Through Brochures

The Brochures, banners, and layers were created as part of the promotional strategy. Promotion through brochures was carried out by distributing them to all members of Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah. Banners were also created and installed in strategic locations. The use of printed promotional media such as brochures and banners represents a marketing communication strategy that complements digital promotion. According to Marbun, (2025), the use of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), which combines digital and non-digital channels, has proven to be more effective in building awareness of educational institution branding compared to relying on only one type of media. Brochures function as informative media containing complete information about the programs, facilities, and advantages of the madrasah, while banners serve as visual media that increase the institution’s visibility within the surrounding environment.



e. Conducting Promotion Through the End of the Academic Year Thanksgiving Event

The madrasah principal utilized the *akhirusanah* or class farewell event as a promotional opportunity. This event was attended by all parents or guardians of students and was also open to the general public. During the end of academic year thanksgiving event, brochures were distributed, and information about Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah was delivered to all participants in attendance, enabling the madrasah to become more

widely known by the broader community.

The use of *akhirusanah* activities as a promotional medium reflects a community-based branding strategy that is considered effective within the context of pesantren based Islamic education. As demonstrated by MY et al., (2025), institutional involvement in socio-religious community activities, including community events and religious gatherings, significantly strengthens the institution's image as a moral and educational center within the community. This strategy also reinforces *word-of-mouth* networks, which are considered one of the most effective student recruitment channels in educational institutions based on social trust (Marhareita et al., 2022).

f. Conducting Evaluation

Conducting evaluation after the new student admission process has ended is very important because it aims to determine whether the strategies implemented by the madrasah principal were successful or still less effective. This evaluation aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each step taken so that improvements can be made quickly if needed. A strategy is considered successful if the predetermined targets have been achieved.

The evaluation stage in the PPDB cycle is an essential component of quality-based management that ensures continuous improvement in the management of educational institutions. According to Karmila et al., (2020), post PPDB evaluation enables madrasah principals to identify strategic gaps, adjust promotional approaches, and improve implementation effectiveness in the following cycle. This process is also in line with the principles of *Total Quality Management (TQM)* in education, which emphasize the importance of systematic feedback as a basis for managerial decision-making (Nurdi & Ahmad, 2025).

2. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in New Student Admissions

The success of the PPDB strategy at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah Tangkit cannot be separated from various supporting factors that strengthen the effectiveness of its implementation. Cooperation between the madrasah principal and the PPDB committee, the positive reputation of the madrasah, good services provided to students, community involvement, as well as the willingness of parents and alumni to provide testimonials became factors supporting the success of PPDB. These factors reflect the importance of social capital in the management of Islamic educational institutions. Public trust built through a positive reputation and alumni involvement constitutes an institutional asset that cannot be replicated instantly, but rather is developed through consistent service quality and commitment to the values of Islamic education (Yazdani, 2025; Mardi, 2025).

On the other hand, there were several obstacles faced by the madrasah in the PPDB process. Increasingly intense competition among madrasahs, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, ongoing administrative problems, and the lack of teachers holding undergraduate degrees became the main challenges that needed to be addressed. These obstacles represent structural challenges commonly faced by private Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, particularly those located in semi-urban areas. According to Gobby et al., (2026), the intensification of competition among educational institutions creates significant affective and managerial pressures, thereby requiring strategic responses that are not only reactive but also anticipatory and data-driven.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the principal of Madrasah Aliyah Miftahun Najah Tangkit

implemented six main strategies in managing New Student Admissions (PPDB), namely establishing a PPDB committee, setting enrollment targets, promoting the madrasah through social media, distributing brochures and banners, utilizing akhirusanah activities as promotional media, and conducting post-admission evaluations. These strategies were implemented in an integrated and systematic manner, enabling the madrasah to exceed its enrollment target. The success of the PPDB process was supported by strong collaboration between the principal and the committee, the institution's positive reputation, active community participation, and support from alumni and parents. However, several challenges were identified, including increasing competition among educational institutions, limited facilities and infrastructure, and a shortage of qualified teachers. The findings indicate that successful PPDB management is influenced not only by promotional activities but also by the principal's ability to exercise strategic leadership, strengthen organizational communication, and build institutional social capital. Therefore, effective leadership plays a crucial role in maintaining the sustainability and competitiveness of pesantren-based madrasahs. Future studies are recommended to examine similar issues in different educational contexts by considering organizational culture, community engagement, and the use of digital communication technologies.

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