Strategy for Accepting New Students Post-COVID-19: A Case Study

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Abstract

Purpose – The impact of COVID-19 has created new problems in the world of education. In addition to the decreasing number of students, the community prefers to provide education to children at home. It makes the education reflection worse because of the minimum number of students. For this reason, in the new normal or post-COVID-19 era, a strategy is needed to increase the number of students. In addition, the purpose of this study was to find out the strategies used in accepting new students after COVID-19. Then, find out the management of new student admissions at PAUD IT ADAR.

Design/methods/approach – The method used was a qualitative methods, the research describes a descriptive narrative and is strengthened by data in the field obtained through interviews, filling out questionnaires, and direct observation.

Findings – The results of this study showed that the new student acceptance strategy was carried out by distributing brochures, repairing facilities and infrastructure or modernizing facilities and infrastructure, enriching relationships, teaching creativity, and providing good service. The management function is carried out by planning related to the new student admissions program, then organizing to form several work groups and teams, for implementing initiatives referring to the initial planning following the strategy carried out, then for evaluating the activities of institutional personnel who conduct evaluation meetings.

Research implications/limitations – The limitation of this study is the lack of quantitative data (numbers), which improves the theoretical findings. The strategy for accepting new students indeed post-COVID 19 in PAUD IT ADAR.

Practical implications – The research suggests that adequately utilizing of the management function can effectively run the post-COVID-19 student acceptance strategy in early childhood institutions. It requires cooperation from various parties and a mature process, including planning, implementation, and evaluation. Good planning and cooperation are necessary to achieve the goal, and the implemented strategy can serve as a best practice for other early childhood education institutions.

Originality/value – The management of implementing the new student admissions program post-COVID-19 can help teachers increase the number of students.

Keywords Early childhood education, Post-COVID-19, Marketing strategy

Paper type Case study

1. Introduction

Since the COVID-19 outbreak hit Indonesia and all countries worldwide, it has caused many changes in the daily activities of people who were previously busy living a busy life and have now stopped evenly (Insyiyah, 2022). The closure of some workplaces and institutions that should have many activities is now limited to avoid the epidemic's rapid spread. Therefore, the Indonesian government provides several policies, namely regulations that aim to maintain public safety and stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Jannah et al., 2021).

COVID-19 is an epidemic that has spread all over the world. COVID-19 is a disease caused by severe acute respiratory coronavirus two or ASAR-CoV-2, a virus that attacks the respiratory system, ranging from mild to severe symptoms in the human respiratory system (Nahariah, 2022). COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered and known virus network after it occurred in Wuhan, China. It is suspected that the spread can be through splashes through the nose, mouth, and when in contact with other people (Wulandari et al., 2022). Nunez et al. said that the COVID outbreak causes symptoms of headache, sore throat, and fever. It causes a lack of immunity in the body it can weaken the immune system in humans (Nunez I. et al., 2022). Then according to Samuel, apart from breathing, the COVID-19 outbreak also causes inflammation of the human throat. It causes shortness of breath and requires intubation to prevent shortness of breath in humans (Chosidow et al., 2022).

As discussed at the outset, the agency sees that the current busy activities are temporarily suspended to reduce activity which causes the spread of the epidemic to accelerate. One of them is an educational institution where since COVID-19 has spread, several educational institutions have been temporarily suspended for an unspecified time (Tabi, 2020). It caused the cessation of teaching and learning activities which were previously a habit for relatives to switch to studying with their parents at home. Seeing this, the government provides solutions by alleviating various problems so that the government issues policies by providing learning with a distance system, where learning is done from home (Pakpahan & Fitriani, 2020). Distance learning is carried out using online methods or what is often called online, or also learning using offline or offline where participants are limited and keep their distance and wear masks, then learning combines both or hybrid (Latif et al., 2021; Fitri & Latif, 2021; Nadlifah et al., 2022; Anwar & Anjarningsih, 2022).

The pandemic brought significant influences and changes to the education system, from the learning system, teacher preparation, curriculum, student learning methods, education administration and services, and student recruitment methods (Puiu et al., 2023). Seeing this causes many problems in the world of education, including strategies for finding or recruiting new students. What is most visible in the course of education is in early childhood education, where because they are used to learning at home, parents prefer their children to stay at home and want to bring tutors home to carry out learning at home or are called private schools (Mulyati, 2021).

Another obstacle is that parents who already know their child's online learning schedule seem to have forgotten and given other responsibilities considered more important than online learning. It causes a lack of concern for parents about the importance of online learning from home (Citraningsih & Wiranata, 2022). Another problem that arises is the lack of an internet network connection which causes the online learning process to be hampered. It shows that student participation is less than before.

In the current new average era, improvements have begun to be made while maintaining the health of education, which is almost going well (Tomić & Vizinger, 2023). Teaching and learning activities have increased and are running well as usual. However, the past few years have confused people about where to put their children. Because the desire of parents to place their children in schools that are more secure to maintain the health and safety of their children is more necessary than the learning system, it causes the decrease in the number of students to become more significant and acceptance more limited.

Given the current phenomena, educational institutions need to innovate new strategies to attract post-pandemic students who were previously limited but now have the flexibility to carry out activities as usual. However, it is also homework for educational institutions to maintain students' health in this post-COVID era. To prevent a decrease in student enrollment, schools must

have an effective strategy for attracting parents' interest in enrolling their children in high-quality educational institutions, as access to quality education is essential. As a form of fulfilling educational needs, institutions must better understand consumer desires. It is the demand of every parent who wants to send their child to a destination school. Not wanting to disappoint parents and parents, educational institutions must do or try to meet the needs of parents to maintain parents' trust so that their children get a proper education.

The strategy of accepting new students in an institution is carried out in various ways. Starting the technology that is currently developing makes it easier for education actors to continue to innovate in improving the recruitment system for new students (Khalaf et al., 2023). In an institution, many ways can be used to recruit and accept new students, starting from planning and direct implementation, and various strategies exist. According to Nasratun Khalilah, recruitment is the business of a person or an organization consisting of educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, or other group associations, which in good recruitment management is having the task of managing, organizing, and having plans and targets in attracting consumers to join or enter the institution (Khalilah, 2022).

During the COVID-19 period, it had an unfavorable impact on the number of students. The problem in several schools experienced a decrease in the number of students. When observed, this also happened at the PAUD IT ADAR Kalasan. The declining number of students has become a new problem in this school. It was caused because the PAUD IT ADAR had a large number of participants, but during COVID-19, it caused a reduction in the number of students. It caused the learning system in schools also to decline. In response to this issue, the school is making a concerted effort to attract new students. After the end of 2022, the government issued a notification to carry out offline learning while still implementing health protocols and maintaining personal hygiene and learning places (Hardiningrum et al., 2021). Seeing this motivates the teachers to be more active in accepting sitting participants. In this case, the teachers at the PAUD IT ADAR integrated islamic children's education institute already have a specific strategy to attract large numbers of students so that the quota of students in the school is met. The strategies used are pretty new and varied. One is utilizing social media as the school's best promotional tool. It is hoped that the strategies and efforts made by teachers at the PAUD IT ADAR can inspire other schools to continue to improve student admissions. Therefore, researchers are interested in the strategies used to get new students in the new normal era or post-COVID-19.

2. Methods

This research was conducted to find the strategy for accepting new students in early childhood education institutions. The PAUD IT ADAR Kalasan are accepting new students post-COVID-19. The data were obtained from observation and going directly to the field by observing the school's acceptance strategy for new students. Strengthened by conducting interviews with teachers and strengthened by documentation of activities. The methodology used is a case study with a descriptive qualitative approach. A descriptive qualitative approach, according to Zuchri says that "descriptive method is a research method used to clarify social phenomena through various research variables that are interrelated with each (Abdussamad, 2021). Data analysis techniques were carried out using the analytical model from Miles and Huberman, as shown figure 1.

Data was collected using description techniques in words, pictures, and realities in the field. The object of research is the Principal, Teachers, and School Operators. Then reduction of essential data is carried out following the direction of the research, as well as removing unnecessary things and widened from the discussion. Then the data is presented in a descriptive form from beginning to end, concluding.
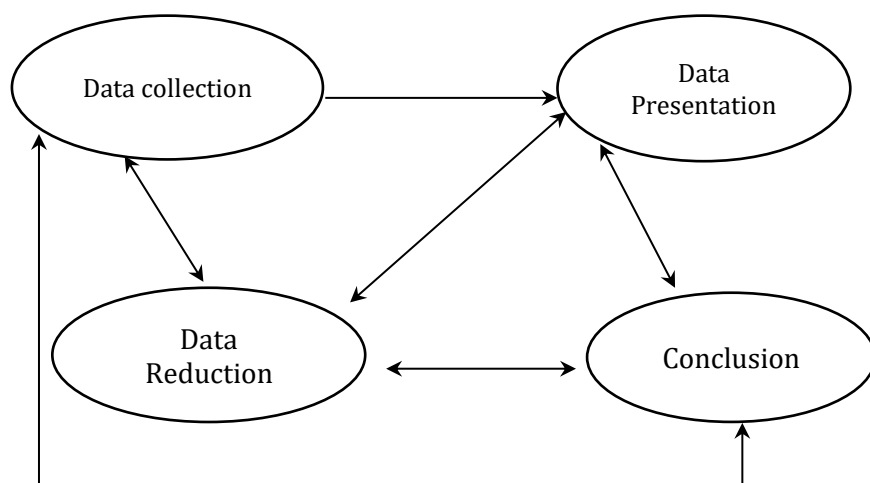
Figure 1. Data Analysis Techniques

3. Result

In the new standard era, the need for education is starting to improve from before. Innovations from schools have started to emerge regarding the future marketing strategy they want to do. As implemented in PAUD IT ADAR, children's educational institutions are to apply and utilize technological tools often used in everyday life and teacher creativity and take advantage of events that can support school promotion to increase or attract students to enter school. This activity follows interviews with school principals who said that the new normal or post-COVID-19 era has a new face and a new enthusiasm to motivate schools to advance schools. It allows the marketing and promotion of institutions to be carried out optimally. In addition, apart from accepting children who register directly, we also try to verbally and visually spread announcements to relatives and the surrounding community that the school has accepted and recruited new students.

3. 1. Post-COVID New Student Acceptance Strategy for PAUD IT ADAR

Post-COVID-19 gave a new face and new spirit to every school. It has caused many innovations to emerge when the new normal era returns to become a new door for the world of education. Likewise, PAUD IT ADAR were an institution that constantly innovates and works hard to implement new student acceptance programs. It can be seen from the results of interviews between researchers and teachers that since the new normal era, schools have experienced an increase in students, starting from Playgroups, Kindergartens to Raudhatul Athfal have increased to more than before. Researchers see that school strategies vary from simple programs to special programs that can invite public attention to the institution. One of them is by distributing flyers. Distribution of brochures is the first step in implementing the strategy of recruiting and accepting new students. Distributing the brochure is divided into several strategies, depending on what opportunities were considered exemplary and were right on target beforehand. It is done so that all strategies go according to the procedure. Some of the strategies carried out by PAUD IT ADAR in recruitment as well as the initial steps for the new student acceptance strategy are as follows:

3.1.1. Through School Events

The statement above indicates that the event can bring in visitors as a good form of promotion. With this event, the teachers also distributed brochures on the acceptance of new students as a form of written notification to the student's parents.

Figure 2. Documentation of School Events

The picture above shows that the event held by the school is one of the leading programs to attract the interest of parents and the surrounding community. In the picture above, it can be seen that the significant events carried out by the school are a form of institutional seriousness in maintaining quality as well as being one of the strategies used by schools in recruiting as well as promotional events as a strategy for accepting new students.

3.1.2. Forming Team Work

The natural environment described in this fairy tale is a forest on the island of Sumatra. The forest Forming teamwork is one of the strategies for accepting new students in schools. It is done to make it easier for teachers to distribute flyers for accepting new students. This teamwork consists of groups of several teachers who are broken down into groups of three to four teachers. Forming a team work as a form of the school's seriousness in managing strategies for accepting new students due to good environmental conditions and entering the new normal era. For this reason, brochure distribution can be carried out optimally from house to house to reach from village to village.

Figure 3. Documentation of Brochure Distribution with Teamwork

The figure 3 shows that teachers distributed brochures in several places around the school and the nearest village, which was not far from the school. The picture shows brochure distribution as a promotional strategy for the school's new student enrollment. Reducing non-content words may lead to the following revised sentence: Brochure distribution is a promotional strategy for the school's new student enrollment.

3.1.3. Making New Student Acceptance Banners

Making banners is a form of the strategy carried out by the teacher to provide notification that the school has opened and is accepting new students. Utilizing and displaying banners printed around the school is an effective and exciting strategy for recruiting new students. It can be seen from the

creativity in design and innovation in it. It is so that parents and other communities can see and support the improvement of students.

Figure 4. Documentation of Installing New Student Acceptance Banners

The figure 4 were a banner design made by the PAUD IT ADAR. The banner is one of the school's strategies in recruiting new students, displaying some documentation of championship activities and events that are the most interesting and quality.

3.1.4. Modernization of Infrastructure

Modifying school facilities and infrastructure is a form of school concern for the aesthetics of the school. By always making changes, it will be conceptualized in the community's vision of the beauty and management of infrastructure facilities, which can create a new impression on school infrastructure. It is done as good management through the improvement and modernization of infrastructure and institutional efforts in making changes and keeping up with the times. Excellent and exciting infrastructure facilities, which are well-managed, will have a good impact. Likewise, the view of the community that the school is well managed is one form of the school's strategy to attract parents and show a good and beautiful impression to the general public when they see it. Because actually, something beautiful to look at will be exciting and extraordinarily memorable.

Figure 5. Documentation of Modernization Activities infrastructure facilities

The figure 5 shows that updating activities to be better than before must be carried out. In addition to creating a comfortable school atmosphere, it can also make an ordinary school look new. The picture above also shows that modifications to school infrastructure will look better and more modern.

3.1.5. Enriching Relationships

Improving relationships is an effort made by schools to accept new students in PAUD IT ADAR. By involving several corporate groups consisting of individuals and groups. Involve several groups, namely: *First*, establish cooperation with parents. In addition to verbal announcements, the school also promotes directly to parents, where each teacher invites and works closely with parents to continue to be partners in attracting community interest by constantly communicating regularly.

Active and maintain the trust of parents and other communities. *Second*, cooperate with local village activists. Collaborating with local village activists is one of the efforts to work together and establish strong relationships with the school. Collaborating with various community groups, such as the Posyandu activists and the women's welfare development group in the village, presents an opportunity for the school to promote the acceptance of new students. *Third*, through teacher creativity, students can engage more actively in the learning process and are more likely to retain information. As in PAUD IT ADAR, teachers prepare interesting strategies to continue demonstrating school quality to parents by carrying out creative activities as a form of institutional promotion. PAUD IT ADAR teachers always give gifts as souvenirs to parents at the end of each semester and also when distributing report cards. It is done by the teacher as a form of cooperation and leaves an interesting impression on parents.

Figure 6. Documentation of Types of PAUD IT ADAR Souvenirs

3.1.6. Providing good service

The important thing in establishing an institution is the excellent service the school provides. It positively affects others and positively impacts the institution's quality. Providing good service to others is one of the school's recruiting strategies and an arena to attract parents to send their children to school by providing a place of service in the form of a waiting room, friendly teachers, and fast service. It makes it easier for interested people to be more flexible and comfortable with the school. In addition, the school also accepts students who register when parents wish to register their children, not at the time of initial registration or when new classes begin. Providing good service is one of the strategies teachers use to provide a sense of comfort and security to parents to make them believe that PAUD IT ADAR is the best school.

3.2. Utilization of communication tools in PAUD IT ADAR New Student Acceptance strategy

Carrying out the acceptance of new students, of course, requires communication technology devices to support the strategy carried out by schools. The forms of media used are the use of communication tools through WhatsApp (WA), Instagram (IG), and Facebook (FB) media. The three social media platforms were selected and used to market Early Childhood Education institutions to the public. The reason for choosing social media is because the first follows the development of an increasingly advanced technological era, and many people, from adults to children, no longer use technology such as gadgets or androids since the Covid outbreak because all learning and all activities are carried out through communication tools by utilizing media. Existing social. Through these three social media, teachers distribute pamphlets, brochures, photos of activities, and other offers that include strategies offered to prospective students and parents as guardians. It is considered strategic enough to be used in marketing institutions to increase the number of students who have experienced a decline, as well as being a surefire way to attract the public to know about early childhood institutions and the qualifications and quality of schools.

4. Discussion

4.1. Strategy for Accepting New Students at Early Childhood Education Institutions

The strategy for accepting new students in each school institution is different. Starting from compiling several strategies that are considered capable of being carried out and following the needs of the general public and following the times. The essential thing in determining a strategy is to analyze the community's needs first so that when the strategy we do is following what is needed (Rachman, 2021). Especially for recruiting new students in each educational institution starting from the kindergarten level to the tertiary level. Although there are various strategies, starting from promotion, ball taking, transfer assistance, and the system for accepting early registration voluntarily or free (Nawandari, 2022). In addition, every educational institution also needs to prepare a good recruitment strategy to increase the number of student charts each year.

The success of an institution in recruiting students is marked by a large number of students, even to the extent that the quota is limited to closing before the specified registration closing schedule. Especially in early childhood education, the strategy is more towards a school promotion system where schools will be well known and of good quality if promotions are carried out correctly and following previous plans. Children carry out early childhood education in their golden age. According to Intan, early childhood education is the process of providing stimulation or stimulation to a child's growth and development, which is carried out from birth to the age of six and involves the entire physical and spiritual health of the child (Intan et al., 2023). In addition, social media is also a form of cooperation and communication between the school and parents (Dita & Budiyanto, 2023). The functions and benefits of social media can be used as a tool to store documentation in the form of video photos of every activity carried out at school, which can attract people who think that the institution is not technologically advanced and that everything can be done through social media which is currently very accessible and accessible to the general public including children (Suryana & Hijriani, 2021). There are even many other schools that will increase competition in the world of education which is getting tougher, by using the Instagram platform as a promotion support, and it can be said that, in general, many have succeeded in utilizing social media as a GDP recruitment medium in education in the current era (Pramesti, 2022).

The benefits of communication tools through social media are Facebook and Instagram, besides promotion in increasing student networking (Pudin, 2022). It also has benefits, such as sharing information and knowledge and building relationships with many other institutions (Susilo, 2022). The WhatsApp media platform, which is the most widely used and often used by educators to communicate with parents/guardians of students, is also one that can be used primarily in building emotional closeness and partnership networks between schools and parents, monitoring students from home, reporting and strengthening relationship with the presence of WA group branding (Patiung et al., 2019). Educators can maximize the platforms that are already available. Even these three platforms, Instagram, Facebook, and Whatsapp, can be used as a means of supporting public relations at schools. Such as branding, marketing, and image building (Romadhona et al., 2022).

Early childhood education institutions have many types, from formal to non-formal (Annisa et al., 2023). Forms of recruitment strategies are also different, from distributing flyers to offering services for childcare. In addition, a good form of strategy in recruiting new students in an institution requires cooperation from other parties, for example, the cooperation of teachers and parents. As a social community, parents are also needed in recruiting students, where parents will be invited to participate in the educational process in early childhood education. Early childhood education is the basis of subsequent education. Children are educated thoroughly from the start at this early age, even though previously, there had been education from the mother or parents as the primary and first madrasah for children (Pransiska, 2022). The analogy is, if likened to paper, the child is a blank paper that is still new and then ready to be used as a container for every stroke of ink in which there is a lot of meaning and knowledge (Melinda, 2022). At the same time, educators use ink or pen. So, whatever educators give to children, will be embedded in and attached to children. Children will be more indoctrinated in everything given at school by their

teachers than their parents. It is evident from the various opinions of parents when observations are made; on average, the answers are the same. In essence, children will argue more often using 'teacher's words' rather than 'parents' words.'

4.2. Strategy for Accepting New Students at Early Childhood Education Institutions

The application of the management function in the strategy of recruiting new students is a good choice. Within the scope of good management, a good strategy will also emerge. Also, management in accepting new students requires the involvement of various parties, starting from school principals, teachers, administration, and community members (Gupta, 2022). it shows how important it is to implement the management function in determining a strategy. Management means managing, organizing, and governing. Managing an institution requires every aspect of management, namely planning, organizing, implementing, and monitoring or evaluating. When institutions carry out good management functions, it will be seen that the quality of schools and the quality of schools is better and more effective (Muslikh, 2022). Managing correctly in every aspect is necessary, such as management in accepting new students every year. Therefore, the importance of implementing the management function in accepting new students will bring up new strategies and innovations in realizing schools that are of interest to the community.

In addition, the importance of implementing the management function in accepting new students is that the strategy used or the program implemented will work well according to the institution's needs (Handayani et al., 2023). Optimizing which strategy to choose will be directed to the plan so that it will go according to the objectives to be achieved in implementing the following plan, which was previously considered good. In order to evaluate the strategy undertaken, it is necessary to measure the recruitment plan that was previously used.

5. Conclusion

The strategy for admitting new students at PAUD IT ADAR has various strategies, from a promotional system using brochures to internet communication tools. In implementing the strategy for admitting new students, the following strategies are used: carrying out periodic promotions in activities held by the school and strengthening by making and installing banners for admitting new students. For the distribution of brochures, a working team will be formed consisting of several teachers. It is used so that teachers can provide opportunities for students to enter schools in a wide range. In addition, another strategy used is an effort to provide a sense of security and comfort, such as providing good service, which is then supported by infrastructure improvements or infrastructure modernization, in addition to maintaining cooperation with colleagues, such as giving gifts in the form of souvenirs to parents and guardians of students, also working with village activists and mothers of local family welfare empowerment groups. It is done to continue establishing cooperation between teachers and parents, as well as schools and the community. The strategy for promoting the admission of new students is not necessarily only carried out with physical effort, but teachers also try to distribute flyers for admitting new students via the internet, using social media tools. The social media tool is a community-friendly communication tool, namely distributing flyers via Whatsapp, sharing them on the Facebook page, not only through the Instagram page, but then the teacher will also try other media like Tik Tok media. In accepting new students in PAUD IT ADAR is equipped with good management, namely implementing a management system in the strategy of accepting new students, with good planning so that the evaluation system is seen as a process for future improvement. This management implements the school's improvement and motivates teachers to innovate and be creative.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Munawarah conceived the presented idea. Ikhsan and Lati Nurliana Wati Fajrina developed the theory of management strategy and early childhood education. Reza Aulia were data taker. Chairun Nisa Fadillah was analysis method. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript.

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Data availability statement

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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