

**SERVICE QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN STUDENT ADMISSIONS: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN BADUNG REGENCY****\*Made Sumada I and Ni WayanSardi Astini**

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**Abstract**

This study aims to evaluate public perceptions of service quality and the level of accountability in the implementation of the New Student Admission (PPDB) process in Badung Regency. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed to capture social realities and the subjective experiences of the community, with data collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal that although the digitalization of PPDB has improved administrative efficiency, several issues persist, such as limited digital literacy, unequal access to information, and suboptimal institutional responsiveness. Schools generally exhibit more adaptive responses compared to the Education Office, which is perceived as less responsive to public complaints. The zoning system has also led to confusion and perceptions of injustice among the public. This study highlights the importance of enhancing public communication, simplifying digital systems, and developing participatory service evaluation models based on citizen perceptions. The findings offer practical contributions to improving local education service policies and theoretical insights into strengthening the concept of inclusive and accountable public services.

**Keywords:** PPDB, Public service, Service quality, Accountability, Public perception, Badung Regency.**INTRODUCTION****Background**

The New Student Admission (Penerimaan Siswa Baru/PSB) process represents a form of public service in the education sector and serves as a key indicator in assessing the quality of educational governance at the regional level. This process involves not only administrative aspects but also fundamental principles of public service such as transparency, fairness, accountability, and public satisfaction. Within the context of decentralization, Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government grants authority to local governments, including district and municipal education offices, to independently manage their education systems, including the implementation of student admissions. Since the enactment of Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation (Permendikbud) No. 1 of 2021 on New Student Admissions (PPDB), the policies regarding zoning systems, affirmative actions, parental job transfers, and achievement-based pathways have become mandatory frameworks for all regions to uniformly implement. However, in practice, various challenges persist, particularly in the aspects of service quality and accountability. In several regions, including Badung Regency, public complaints have emerged concerning mismatched zoning boundaries, insufficient public outreach, technical issues with the online system, and unclear procedures (Badung Education Office, 2023). According to the Indonesian Ombudsman (ORI) in 2022, the education sector ranked among the top five sectors most frequently reported by the public, with the majority of complaints related to the PPDB process, which was perceived as lacking in transparency and fairness (Ombudsman RI, 2022). In Badung Regency specifically, an evaluation report by the Regional Inspectorate (2023) noted a 12% decline in public

satisfaction with the PSB services compared to the previous year. This dissatisfaction was primarily related to the quality of information dissemination, service timeliness, and staff responsiveness. The detailed changes in public satisfaction from 2022 to 2024 are presented in the table below:

As shown above, satisfaction with information dissemination decreased by 16% from 2022 to 2024, indicating public dissatisfaction with the clarity and accessibility of PPDB-related information. The 14% drop in service timeliness suggests that the process is perceived as increasingly slow, potentially due to a rise in applicants or inefficiencies in the system. An 11% decline in staff responsiveness reflects public frustration with how officers addressed questions and complaints. Overall, a 15% decline in satisfaction across three years underscores an urgent need for evaluation and reform in the PPDB system in Badung Regency. Various academic studies have sought to analyze the challenges in implementing PSB policies. Supriyanto and Wahyudi (2020) found that the quality of PSB services is largely determined by communication effectiveness, human resource capacity, and community participation. Nurcholis (2021), meanwhile, emphasized the role of accountability in educational services as a mechanism of public responsibility that fosters citizens' trust in the education bureaucracy. Nevertheless, few studies have specifically examined public perceptions of service quality and accountability in PSB at the district government level, particularly in Badung Regency, which calls for further exploration. Research on public service delivery in the education sector has expanded significantly over the past two decades, particularly in light of the adoption of good governance principles and citizen-centered public service models (Denhardt&Denhardt, 2000). International literature highlights service quality as a core variable in evaluating the effectiveness of public bureaucracies (Gronroos, 1990; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988).

**Table 1. Changes in public satisfaction levels with ppdb services in badung regency (2022–2024)**

Aspect	Previous Studies	Identified Gaps
Research Focus	Predominantly on technical and normative aspects of PPDB	Limited exploration of public perceptions as indicators of quality and accountability
Analytical Dimensions	Separated studies on service quality and accountability	Lack of integrated analysis combining both perspectives
Research Approach	Typically top-down, regulation-based approaches	Few studies using a bottom-up, citizen perception-based approach
Regional Context	Mostly focused on major cities or rural areas	Limited research in semi-urban, tourism-oriented areas like Badung Regency
Evaluation Models	Lack of citizen-driven integrated evaluation models	Need for participatory evaluation models based on citizen feedback

**Table 2. Research gaps in previous studies**

Aspect	Previous Studies	Identified Gaps
Research Focus	Predominantly on technical and normative aspects of PPDB	Limited exploration of public perceptions as indicators of quality and accountability
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In the education context, service quality is commonly assessed through dimensions such as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996). Meanwhile, public accountability in educational services, as conceptualized by Bovens (2007), involves the obligation of government institutions to explain and justify policies and actions to the public. Studies by De Graaf (2010) and Dubnick & Frederickson (2011) further argue that accountability is not merely procedural but also reflects the trust relationship between government and citizens. In the Indonesian context, Supriyanto and Wahyudi (2020) note that the implementation of PPDB continues to face numerous technical and social challenges, especially in applying the zoning system. Nurcholis (2021) also highlights that accountability in educational services relies heavily on transparency and public participation. However, most previous studies are normative and bureaucratic in nature, focusing on technical implementation by government institutions rather than on the perceptions and lived experiences of citizens as service users. Furthermore, there is a lack of studies that integrate service quality and public accountability within the context of student admissions at the district level, especially in semi-urban or tourism-driven regions like Badung Regency.

Based on this literature review, several research gaps justify the need for this study:

This study aims to address these gaps by combining two key perspectives public service quality and public accountability within a unified evaluation framework grounded in community perceptions. By focusing on Badung Regency, this research provides not only practical contributions for improving local education services but also theoretical advancements toward developing a more participatory and context-sensitive model of public service evaluation in the education sector

### Problem Formulation

In the context of bureaucratic reform and increasing demands for transparency in public services, the process of new student admissions (PPDB) has become a central concern, particularly in ensuring equitable and quality access to education. However, the implementation of policies such as the zoning system continues to generate public complaints and dissatisfaction.

Previous studies have predominantly focused on technical implementation or regulatory aspects, yet few have thoroughly examined public perceptions of service quality and the accountability of local governments in managing the PPDB process.

Based on these considerations, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do community members perceive the quality of public services in the new student admission process in Badung Regency?
2. How do the public perceive the accountability of the Badung Regency Education Office in implementing the PPDB?
3. What factors influence public perceptions regarding service quality and institutional responsibility in the PPDB process?
4. How can the integration of service quality and accountability dimensions be used to evaluate and improve PPDB policies through participatory approaches?

### Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Analyze public perceptions of the service quality provided by the Badung Regency Education Office in the new student admission process.
2. Examine the level of accountability demonstrated by the relevant institution in implementing the PPDB, based on citizens' experiences and viewpoints.
3. Identify key factors that influence public perceptions regarding the PPDB services.
4. Formulate an integrative model of public service evaluation based on community perceptions by combining quality and accountability dimensions in the context of student admission policies.

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

### Public service quality theory

Public service is an activity or a series of activities carried out by the government or public organizations to meet the needs and satisfaction of citizens in accordance with the principles of

efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability (Damanhuri, 2006). According to Denhardt and Denhardt (2000), public services should be oriented toward citizen satisfaction as service users, rather than merely fulfilling administrative procedures. The quality of public services in the education sector reflects the capacity of educational institutions and local governments to meet the public's need for services that are accessible, fair, transparent, and satisfying both administratively and emotionally. In the context of new student admissions (PPDB), service quality is closely linked to public trust in the education system, particularly in terms of equitable access and fair treatment for all segments of society. According to Grönroos (2007), service quality is the result of users' perceptions of service interactions, encompassing both technical aspects (what is delivered) and functional aspects (how the service is delivered). In the context of public services such as PPDB, the functional dimension often becomes a source of public dissatisfaction, as it involves the attitudes, communication, and responsiveness of the bureaucracy in addressing complaints or public needs. Furthermore, Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2018) emphasize that in the public sector, the *Public Service Logic* model highlights that service quality is not solely determined by the provider but is co-constructed through interactions with citizens, who actively evaluate and assign meaning to the service process they experience.

Public service quality is a fundamental aspect of effective and efficient governance. According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), service quality can be measured through five key dimensions:

1. Reliability: The ability to deliver promised services accurately and consistently.
2. Responsiveness: The willingness and ability of staff to assist customers and provide prompt service.
3. Assurance: The knowledge and courtesy of employees, as well as their ability to inspire trust and confidence.
4. Empathy: Individualized attention and understanding of customers' specific needs.
5. Tangibles: physical facilities, equipment, and the appearance of personnel that support service delivery.

In the context of PPDB, public service refers to how the Education Office provides registration services that are accessible, transparent, and fair for prospective students and their parents. Quality service delivery enhances public trust and reinforces the legitimacy of local government (Osborne, 2010).

**Theoretical perspectives on service quality:** According to Tjiptono (2019), service quality can be understood as a measure of how well the delivered service meets customer or public expectations. When the service exceeds expectations, it leads to satisfaction; conversely, dissatisfaction occurs when public expectations are not met. Meanwhile, Grönroos (2007) states that service quality consists of two main aspects:

1. Technical quality: the actual outcome of the service (e.g., whether a student is admitted or not);
2. Functional quality: the manner in which the service is delivered (e.g., whether the PPDB procedures are transparent and communicative).

Furthermore, in the context of public service delivery, Osborne (2020) introduces the *Public Service Logic* approach, which

emphasizes that quality is not solely produced by service providers but is co-productive in nature meaning that citizens play an active role in shaping the meaning of service through their experiences and interactions with public institutions.

**Dimensions of public service quality in education:** One of the most widely used frameworks is the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), which remains relevant when adapted to the context of public education. Several studies have contextualized these dimensions into five key aspects:

1. Tangibles: Accessibility of the online PPDB system, clarity of information, and the readiness of supporting infrastructure.
2. Reliability: Consistency and accuracy of the admission process, including quotas, zoning policies, and timelines.
3. Responsiveness: The ability of school staff and administrators to respond to inquiries and resolve technical issues.
4. Assurance: Staff competence in delivering services with honesty and adherence to established procedures.
5. Empathy: Sensitivity to social conditions, such as students from underprivileged families or those with disabilities.

Furthermore, according to Mafini and Dhurup (2020), in the context of primary education, the dimensions of *empathy* and *responsiveness* have a significant impact on public satisfaction, particularly in urban areas where demand for high-quality public schools is high. In addition, a study by Kamble et al. (2021) found that the digitalization of education services (including online PPDB systems) must be accompanied by public digital literacy and rapid system responsiveness to prevent disparities in access across regions.

### Public accountability theory

Accountability is a core principle of good governance, requiring public actors or institutions to be answerable for the execution of their duties and the use of authority (Bovens, 2007). Bovens further explains that accountability is a social relationship in which an actor is obligated to explain and justify their actions to a forum that has the right to evaluate and, if necessary, impose sanctions. In the context of public service delivery, accountability goes beyond administrative reporting and includes aspects of transparency, integrity, and openness to performance evaluation by the public (Mulgan, 2000). According to Dubnick and Frederickson (2011), public accountability comprises both horizontal dimensions (accountability among institutions or to oversight bodies) and vertical dimensions (direct accountability to the public). In the education sector particularly within the PPDB process vertical accountability is especially critical, as it relates to public trust in a fair and non-discriminatory selection system. In the context of modern public service, Dubnick and Frederickson (2011) assert that accountability should be understood as a dynamic process that is not merely administrative, but also moral, political, and social. They distinguish between *answerability* (the capacity to explain actions) and *enforceability* (the capacity to sanction failures). Furthermore, Lindberg (2013) articulates three key elements of accountability:

1. Information: The presence of transparency in both processes and outcomes;

2. Justification: The obligation of service providers to explain the rationale behind decisions or policies;
3. Sanction/Correction: The existence of mechanisms for correction or punishment in response to misconduct or deviations.

In the context of education, this principle requires that institutions such as the education office, schools, and PPDB committees be subject to open public monitoring, criticism, and accountability.

#### **Accountability in the context of educational services:**

Accountability in education refers to the ability and willingness of educational institutions and relevant authorities to explain and take responsibility for decision-making processes, resource allocation, and the achievement of educational outcomes to the public (Osman, 2020). This includes, but is not limited to, program implementation, student distribution, zoning enforcement, and fairness in student admissions. A study by Agrawal and Johnson (2018) found that in the education sector, the form of accountability most expected by the public is *responsive accountability* namely, timely responses to complaints, aspirations, and public needs. This is particularly relevant in the PPDB system, especially when there is a mismatch between parents' expectations and the selection outcomes. Furthermore, Yin, Mladenovic, and Thomas (2022) emphasize that digital accountability is key to educational service delivery in the modern era. They highlight the importance of real-time public access to information, transparency in online selection system algorithms, and the availability of technology-based complaint channels to strengthen accountability. Meanwhile, according to Rosser and Fahmi (2020), accountability practices in the education sector of developing countries like Indonesia often face structural challenges such as limited independent oversight, a closed bureaucratic culture, and weak public participation. Therefore, strengthening the institutional capacity of local education administrators is essential to meet public accountability expectations comprehensively. Public accountability refers to the obligation of government institutions to act responsibly and transparently in the use of resources and the performance of their duties toward the public (Bovens, 2007). Denhardt and Denhardt (2000) emphasize that accountability is not only about formal reporting but also about public involvement in decision-making and performance evaluation processes. In the context of educational services, accountability encompasses the following dimensions:

1. Transparency: openness in providing information related to service processes and outcomes.
2. Responsiveness: the government's ability to respond to public complaints and aspirations.
3. Responsibility: the execution of duties in accordance with regulations and ethical service standards.
4. Answerability: the existence of clear mechanisms for holding institutions accountable to the public (Dubnick & Frederickson, 2011).

#### **Dimensions of accountability in the implementation of PPDB:**

Accountability is not limited to administrative responsibility; it encompasses various dimensions that reflect the commitment of public institutions to ensure transparency, fairness, efficiency, and community involvement. According to Bovens (2007), Lindberg (2013), and supported by recent

studies, accountability can be described through several key dimensions:

#### 1. Procedural Accountability

Refers to the extent to which public institutions implement processes and procedures in accordance with existing legal frameworks and policies. In the context of PPDB (New Student Admissions), this includes compliance with national and regional regulations, such as the Ministry of Education Regulation No. 1 of 2021 on PPDB and local zoning rules. Indicators: availability of clear technical guidelines; alignment of implementation with applicable rules; and consistency among institutions in procedural execution (Bovens, 2007; Osman, 2020).

#### 2. Transparency Accountability

Transparency involves ease of public access to relevant and essential information, enabling the public to understand, monitor, and objectively assess public services. In PPDB, this relates to access to quota information, school capacity, selection results, and the zoning system. Indicators: public disclosure of selection outcomes; online accessibility of PPDB information; and clear explanations of selection criteria and scoring mechanisms (Yin, Mladenovic, & Thomas, 2022; Rosser & Fahmi, 2020).

#### 3. Responsive Accountability

Describes the extent to which service institutions are prompt and responsive in addressing community needs, complaints, and aspirations. In the education context, this refers to the readiness of the PPDB committee or education office to handle public reports promptly and effectively. Indicators: availability of complaint channels (both online and offline); speed and quality of responses; and public satisfaction with problem resolution (Agrawal & Johnson, 2018; Lindberg, 2013).

#### 4. Participatory Accountability

A form of accountability emphasizing public involvement in planning, monitoring, and evaluating public services. In PPDB, communities may be engaged through school meetings, parent forums, or public complaint units. Indicators: public hearings or PPDB socialization forums; public access to provide input; and involvement of community leaders or school committees (Lindberg, 2013; Bovens, 2007).

#### 5. Evaluative Accountability

Focuses on the extent to which public institutions conduct evaluations of their service performance and implement improvements based on the results. Indicators: annual or periodic evaluation reports; internal and external audits; and policy adjustments based on evaluation findings (Dubnick & Frederickson, 2011).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach with the aim of providing an in-depth depiction of public perceptions regarding service quality and accountability in the implementation of the New Student Admission process (PPDB) in Badung Regency. This approach is selected for its

strength in exploring social realities contextually and uncovering the subjective meanings that citizens assign to education service policies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research was conducted in public elementary schools in Badung Regency, Bali Province, focusing particularly on areas with high student population density and frequent public complaints related to the PPDB process, such as North Kuta and Abiansemal Districts, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The primary data in this study were obtained through several qualitative methods:

- 1) In-depth interviews with key informants, including: Parents of students; Prospective students; School principals; PPDB officers from the Department of Education; and Community leaders
- 2) Direct observation of the PPDB service mechanisms, such as the online registration system, face-to-face services, and public communication activities including socialization sessions and complaint handling processes.
- 3) Document analysis, which included: Technical guidelines (Juknis) for PPDB; Regional regulations/regent decrees related to zoning and enrollment quotas; Educational statistical data from the Badung Regency Department of Education; and News articles from local media reporting on PPDB implementation.

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, in which participants were deliberately chosen based on specific criteria, including: Having direct experience with the PPDB process, Holding a role in service provision or educational policymaking, and Representing different geographical areas (urban, suburban, and rural). The number of informants was determined using the principle of data saturation, which is reached when additional interviews no longer yield new or relevant information (Masn, 2010).

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) interactive model, which involves three key stages:

- 1) Data Reduction: Sorting, simplifying, and organizing the results of interviews and document reviews to focus on relevant information.
- 2) Data Display: Presenting the information in narrative form, matrices, and direct quotations to facilitate interpretation.
- 3) Conclusion Drawing and Verification: Identifying emerging patterns, themes, and meanings from the field data to answer the research questions.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the analysis included thematic categorization of qualitative data, strengthening the validity of interpretations, and maintaining a clear audit trail for transparency and confirmability.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

The implementation of the *New Student Admission (PPDB)* at the elementary level in Badung Regency reveals a complex interplay between system design and community experience. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts from parents, school officials, and education stakeholders resulted in seven emergent themes, described as follows:

- 1) Digitalization and Standardization of the PPDB Process. The PPDB system in Badung Regency is administered online through the *Sistem Penerimaan Mahasiswa Baru (SPMB)*. Schools operate under technical guidelines issued by the Education Office, and reports are verified by the Technical Implementation Unit (UPT). These practices reflect an adherence to standardized operating procedures across public schools, promoting uniformity and formal compliance in service delivery.
- 2) Data Validation and Digital Literacy as Persistent Challenges. While the online system has facilitated administrative efficiency, significant challenges persist regarding data validation. Parents often struggle with uploading documents due to system errors, limited access to technology, and low levels of digital literacy. One parent, for instance, expressed confusion about choosing the appropriate enrollment track and reported difficulty in navigating the upload process. These findings highlight digital exclusion as a barrier to equitable access.
- 3) System-Based Transparency with Uneven Perception. Stakeholders reported that the system is designed for transparency, with public access to announcements and selection results. However, rural respondents, particularly from village communities, expressed confusion regarding zoning rules and called for more outreach. This gap suggests that while the system is technically open, perceptions of transparency are not uniformly positive across demographic groups.
- 4) Layered Complaint Management and Communication Gaps. A tiered complaint-handling mechanism exists, ranging from schools to UPTs and the Education Office. Although complaints submitted to schools are often addressed promptly, several respondents found it difficult to communicate directly with the higher-level authorities. This points to a disconnect in cross-level communication, reducing the overall responsiveness of the system.
- 5) Service Quality Improvements through Human Resources and Infrastructure. Efforts to improve PPDB services include training school admission committees, conducting periodic evaluations, and upgrading server capacity. Daily supervision forms are employed as tools for internal quality control. Nonetheless, additional support is needed, especially for rural communities unfamiliar with online systems.
- 6) Technology as the Backbone of Modern PPDB. All informants acknowledged the role of technology in streamlining and accelerating the PPDB process. Digital platforms offer broader geographic reach and structured workflows. However, disparities in access and digital capability across regions remain a major challenge for full implementation of online-based services.
- 7) Community Participation as a Success Factor. Active community involvement such as honest data submission, participation in information sessions, and document preparation emerged as a critical factor in the success of the PPDB process. Stakeholders emphasized that community engagement ensures smoother implementation and fosters shared responsibility.

### Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the dual nature of digitalizing the *New Student Admission (PPDB)* system in Badung Regency. While digitization has increased procedural efficiency, its success remains contingent upon the

preparedness of both the public and the implementing institutions.

**Informational Inequality and Gaps in Government Communication:** Most respondents reported that they received PPDB information through informal channels such as WhatsApp groups, kindergarten teachers, neighborhood leaders, and neighbors, rather than from official communication platforms of the Education Office. This reveals a communication deficit in formal public service delivery. According to the OECD (2020), effective communication and widespread dissemination of public information are prerequisites for equitable access to education services.

**Technological Barriers and Digital Literacy Deficit:** All respondents encountered technical issues, particularly difficulties uploading documents and unstable internet connectivity. These problems highlight a mismatch between policy design and user readiness. Grindle (2018) asserts that low local administrative capacity often undermines the implementation of technically complex policies. In this case, the digital divide continues to exclude vulnerable populations from fully accessing educational services.

**Unequal Responsiveness Across Institutional Levels:** While schools were perceived as cooperative and supportive during the registration process, the Education Office was viewed as distant and unresponsive. This gap indicates weak vertical coordination among implementing units, echoing Van Meter and Van Horn's (1975) policy implementation model, which emphasizes the importance of inter-organizational communication for successful policy delivery.

**Procedural vs. Substantive Transparency:** Although selection results were publicly posted, many parents viewed the zoning system as opaque and confusing. In rural and peri-urban areas especially, this has led to perceptions of injustice and administrative bias. As a result, procedural transparency (i.e., formal openness) fails to translate into substantive transparency (i.e., clarity and fairness in outcomes), which is crucial for public legitimacy.

**Ineffective Feedback Mechanisms and Lack of Institutional Learning:** Respondents preferred to lodge complaints with local schools rather than the Education Office, citing limited access and ineffective higher-level grievance channels. This suggests that the multilevel complaint system lacks responsiveness and undermines institutional learning. In line with Grindle's (1980) adaptive implementation theory, weak feedback loops prevent continuous policy refinement and improvement.

**Call for Participatory and Contextualized Governance:** Parents advocated for simplification of the PPDB process, more intensive information dissemination in rural areas, and technical training for digitally inexperienced users. Suggestions included involving community-level actors such as village heads, *banjar* leaders, and *posyandu* (maternal and child health posts) in outreach. These demands reinforce the relevance of participatory and bottom-up approaches to public service delivery, as proposed by Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg (2018).

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the implementation of the New Student Admission (PPDB) system in Badung Regency has undergone

substantial transformation through digitalization. However, significant challenges remain in ensuring service quality and public accountability. Based on empirical findings and theoretical analysis, several key conclusions can be drawn:

1. **Service Quality Remains Uneven.** The overall quality of the PPDB process is not yet optimal, particularly in terms of information accessibility, staff responsiveness, and system simplification. A large segment of the public still relies on informal information channels due to the limitations of official government communication platforms.
2. **Institutional Accountability Gaps.** Accountability mechanisms, particularly at the level of the Education Office, are perceived as insufficient. Schools demonstrate greater adaptability and responsiveness compared to the Education Office, which is often viewed as inaccessible and slow in addressing public complaints.
3. **Zoning Policy and Perceived Injustice.** Although the zoning system is formally implemented and publicly disclosed, it remains poorly understood by the public. This lack of substantive transparency leads to perceptions of unfairness, especially concerning the criteria for student selection and affirmative pathways.
4. **Limited Public Participation and Weak Feedback Loops.** Public participation in the PPDB process is largely administrative and does not extend to monitoring or system improvement. Grievance mechanisms remain fragmented and lack vertical integration, thereby limiting their potential to inform continuous policy refinement.
5. **Digital Divide and Exclusion Risks.** Digital readiness among the public, especially in rural areas, poses a major barrier to accessing online services. Low levels of digital literacy exacerbate the risk of exclusion and deepen inequality in access to public education services.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, this study proposes several strategic recommendations to enhance the quality and accountability of the PPDB process in Badung Regency:

1. **Enhance public information inclusion:** The Education Office should strengthen official information dissemination channels, both online and offline, by collaborating with village authorities, schools, and local community networks. Outreach efforts must be localized, using culturally and contextually appropriate media formats, particularly in rural areas.
2. **Simplify the digital system and provide support mechanisms:** The PPDB digital system must be streamlined to reduce procedural complexity. Visual and audio-based user guides should be developed, accompanied by short training sessions for parents in areas with low digital literacy, to improve accessibility and user competence.
3. **Strengthen institutional accountability and responsiveness:** A dedicated rapid response team should be established within the Education Office to handle public grievances. Both online and offline complaint mechanisms must be fully operational, integrated, and followed up transparently to foster public trust and service reliability.
4. **Evaluate and Revise the Zoning Policy:** A comprehensive review of the zoning system should be conducted to clarify selection indicators and improve

public understanding. Transparent disclosure of zoning radii, school quotas, and affirmative criteria is essential to ensure equity and legitimacy.

5. **Develop Participatory Evaluation Mechanisms:** Local governments should institutionalize citizen feedback systems to assess the quality and fairness of PPDB services periodically. Public forums and online surveys can serve as effective platforms for capturing diverse community perspectives and informing policy adjustments.

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