

Differences In Parents' Perceptions Based On Economic Strata Towards The High School Separation Policy In Bandar Lampung

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ABSTRACT

The tradition of school farewell ceremonies in Indonesia has evolved into a significant academic and social milestone, yet it frequently sparks public controversy due to high implementation costs that burden lower-income families. In response, the Governor of Lampung issued Circular Letter No. 73 of 2025, which regulates these events to ensure they do not impose a financial burden. This study aims to analyze parents' perceptions of this policy and test whether significant differences in perception exist based on socioeconomic strata. Using a quantitative, data were collected through questionnaires from 207 parents in Bandar Lampung, representing diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Data were analyzed using crosstabulation and the Pearson Chi-Square statistical test to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status and perception categories determined through a cut-off point method. The results reveal a highly significant difference in perception between parents from middle-high and middle-low socioeconomic strata ($p=0.000$). Parents from middle-low backgrounds exhibit overwhelming support (93% positive perception), viewing the policy as a crucial form of economic protection. Conversely, the middle-high group shows a notably higher level of resistance (38% negative perception), reflecting a conflict between policy objectives and the social expectations or prestige values of the upper class. These findings suggest that policymakers must design more inclusive and persuasive communication strategies to minimize sociological resistance and ensure equitable policy implementation.

Keywords: Public Policy, Policy Evaluation, Parents' Perception, School Farewell, Socioeconomic Strata

I. INTRODUCTION

School farewell ceremonies have become a mandatory annual tradition at the end of the academic period, particularly in senior high schools. This momentum serves as a formal platform for schools to hand back educational responsibility to parents while providing moral guidance for students transitioning to higher education. Ideally, these events aim to appreciate academic achievements and strengthen emotional bonds among the school community. Farewell activities are often designed with various sequences, ranging from simple graduation processions to elaborate art performances and student awards.

However, the organization of school farewells currently faces serious challenges, primarily due to soaring costs driven by evolving social trends. There has been a significant shift in event locations, from simple school halls to luxurious convention centers and five-star hotels. This phenomenon has triggered a shift in the essence of the ceremony an emotional academic parting has transformed into a display of luxury and lifestyle. The rising standard of glamour indirectly creates social pressure, where farewells are no longer viewed as academic ceremonies but as status symbols that burden parents financially and psychologically.

This issue has escalated from internal school complaints to a public concern. Various reports highlight a mismatch between farewell activities and the economic reality of parents. For instance, at SMAN 17, allegations of illegal levies emerged where even 10th and 11th-grade students were burdened with the costs for the 12th-grade farewell. Parents expressed significant objections, arguing that education for university should be prioritized over ceremonial expenses, especially given the current difficult economic climate. This situation creates a dilemma for

families in the lower-middle-class strata, potentially turning school farewells into a space of social discrimination.

In response to these public grievances, the Lampung Provincial Government through the Department of Education issued Circular Letter No. 73 of 2025. This policy emphasizes that farewell ceremonies are not mandatory and must prioritize simplicity and kinship without imposing financial burdens on parents. It strictly prohibits holding farewells in hotels or luxury venues, mandating schools to optimize existing facilities. Nevertheless, this regulation has met with mixed reactions. While lower-middle-class parents welcome the policy for easing their financial burden, upper-middle-class parents often perceive it as a restriction on their desire to provide the best appreciation for their children's milestones.

Previous research has demonstrated that parents' economic factors significantly influence how individuals perceive and respond to public services. For example, family economic conditions directly impact student learning participation and health service utilization. However, most existing studies focus primarily on academic aspects or healthcare, leaving a research gap regarding non-academic school policies, such as farewell cost restrictions. This study aims to fill that gap by conducting a comparative analysis between SMA Xaverius Pahoman (representing the upper middle class strata with self-financing systems) and SMA Negeri 8 Bandar Lampung (representing the lower middle class strata supported by government subsidies/BOS funds).

The purpose of this article is to explicitly address three main research objectives:

1. Identifying the characteristics of parents based on the school profile.
2. Analyzing parents' perceptions of the farewell policy based on public policy evaluation criteria.
3. Examining the differences in perception between upper-middle-class and lower-middle class economic groups. Through this comparative lens, the research will prove whether socio-economic backgrounds create significant disparities in the perception of education policies.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Perception Theory*

Perception is the process of sensing, organizing, and interpreting stimuli into a meaningful understanding. According to Walgito (1981), perception is an integrated activity influenced by internal factors (needs, experiences, socio-economic background) and external factors (object characteristics). In this study, perception is viewed as the parents' response to the school farewell policy, which can result in either positive support or negative resistance depending on their individual interpretation.

B. *The Process and Factors Influencing Perception*

The perception process consists of four stages physical (sensing), physiological (transmission to the brain), psychological (interpretation), and the final response (behavior). This study identifies socio-economic status as a critical internal "filter" that colors how parents interpret government regulations. While the stimulus (the policy) is identical for all, the resulting perception differs because each economic stratum has distinct financial capacities, needs, and expectations.

C. *Public Policy and Evaluation Criteria*

Public policy is a purposive course of action by the government to solve social problems. According to Dunn (2016), a policy system involves the interaction between policy content, stakeholders, and the environment. To evaluate parents' perceptions, this research utilizes six criteria from Dunn: Effectiveness, Efficiency, Equity, Relevance, Impact, and Sustainability. These indicators are used to measure whether the restriction on farewell costs is perceived as a protective solution or an aspirational barrier.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative approach to objectively measure and analyze the data. According to Arikunto (2019), quantitative research involves the use of numerical data, from collection to interpretation and results presentation. Specifically, a comparative research design is utilized to seek fundamental answers regarding cause and effect by analyzing the factors behind a specific phenomenon (Nazir, 2014). This design compares the perceptions of parents from two different socio-economic backgrounds regarding school farewell policies.

A. *Research Location and Time*

The research was conducted at two high schools in Bandar Lampung City representing different socio-economic strata: SMA Xaverius Pahoman (representing upper-middle-class through a self-financing system) and SMA Negeri 8 Bandar Lampung (representing lower-middle-class through government-subsidized financing). The study took place over two months, from December 2025 to January 2026. The detailed schedule of activities, including proposal seminars, data collection, and report preparation, is documented systematically within the research timeframe.

B. *Population and Sample*

The population consists of all 12th-grade parents from both schools, totaling 429 individuals (225 from SMA Xaverius and 204 from SMA Negeri 8). The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 0,05 margin of error:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling was then applied to divide the sample into two groups (N_a) = 109 for the upper-middle-class group and (N_b) = 98 for the lower-middle-class group.

C. *Research Variables and Operational Definitions*

The independent variable is socio-economic status, categorized by the school's financing system. The dependent variable is parent perception, measured through an adaptation of Dunn's (2016) evaluation criteria. These perceptions are quantified using a 4-point Likert scale (1: Strongly Disagree to 4: Strongly Agree) across six indicators: effectiveness, efficiency, equity, relevance, impact, and sustainability.

D. *Data Collection and Instrument Testing*

Primary data were collected through online and offline questionnaires, while secondary data included official documents like Circular Letter No. 73 of 2025 and media publications. To ensure instrument accuracy, validity was tested using the Pearson Product Moment correlation, and reliability was assessed through the Cronbach's Alpha formula. A questionnaire is considered reliable if it yields consistent results over repeated measurements. In this study, categorical data coding was applied to facilitate processing, with specific codes for socio-economic strata and perception categories (Positive or Negative).

E. *Data Analysis Techniques*

Data analysis involved two stages. First, univariate analysis was conducted to describe respondent characteristics using frequency distributions and percentages $P = f/n$ times 100%. Second, bivariate analysis was performed using the Chi-Square test to examine the significant

differences between groups

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Characteristics of Respondents and Descriptive Findings

The first objective was to identify parent characteristics based on school profiles. The data shows a clear distinction between the two groups. SMA Xaverius Pahoman represents the upper-middle-class group with a self-financing system, while SMA Negeri 8 represents the lower-middle-class group supported by government subsidies. The demographic distribution is essential to establish the socio-economic context of the respondents before analyzing their perceptions.

Tabel 4.5 Distribusi Responden Berdasarkan Asal Sekolah

No.	Asal Sekolah	Klasifikasi	Frekuensi (n)	Persentase (%)
1.	SMA Xaverius Pahoman	Menengah Ke Atas (Pembayaran Sekolah Mandiri)	109	53%
2.	SMA Negeri 8	Menengah Ke Bawah (Pembayaran Sekolah Subsidi)	98	47%
Jumlah			207	100%

Sumber: Data Olahan (Output SPSS)

B. Analysis of Parent Perceptions Based on Policy Evaluation Criteria

The second objective involved analyzing perceptions using six evaluation criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, equity, relevance, impact, and sustainability. Based on the Crosstabulation analysis in Table 4.18, there is a visible disparity in support for Circular Letter No. 73 of 2025. The lower-middle-class group (SMA Negeri 8) shows an overwhelming positive perception of 93%, viewing the policy as a protective measure against financial burdens. In contrast, the upper-middle-class group (SMA Xaverius) shows a lower positive perception of 62%, with 38% responding negatively due to concerns over the reduction of event quality and social prestige.

Tabel 4.25 Tabulasi Silang Strata Ekonomi x Kategori Persepsi

Strata Ekonomi		Kategori Persepsi		Total
		Persepsi Positif	Persepsi Negatif	
Menengah Ke Atas	<i>Count</i>	68	41	109
	<i>Expected Count</i>	84	25	109
	<i>% within Strata_Ekonomi</i>	62%	38%	100%
Menengah Ke Bawah	<i>Count</i>	91	7	98
	<i>Expected Count</i>	75	23	98
	<i>% within Strata_Ekonomi</i>	93%	7%	100%
Total	<i>Count</i>	159	48	207
	<i>Expected Count</i>	159	48	207
	<i>% within Strata_Ekonomi</i>	77%	23%	100%

Sumber: Data Olahan (Output SPSS)

C. Interpretation and Synthesis of Findings (Hypothesis Testing)

To answer the third objective regarding the differences in perception, a Chi-Square test was performed. The analysis yielded a Pearson Chi-Square value of 26,902 with an Asymp. Sig. of 0,000. Since the p-value is less than 0,05 ($0,000 < 0,05$), the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected. This statistically proves a significant difference in perception between upper-middle and lower-middle-class parents.

Tabel 4.26 Hasil Uji *Chi-Square Test*

Uji Statistik	Nilai (Value)	df	Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided)
<i>Pearson Chi-Square</i>	26,902	1	0,000
<i>Continuity Correction</i>	25,218	1	0,000
<i>Likelihood Ratio</i>	29,416	1	0,000
<i>Fisher's Exact Test</i>	—	—	0,000
<i>Linear-by-Linear Association</i>	26,772	1	0,000
<i>N of Valid Cases</i>	207		

Sumber: Data Olahan (Output SPSS)

Synthesis of these results confirms that socio-economic status serves as a psychological "filter" in perceiving public policy. For lower-income families, the policy is interpreted as an "Economic Solution" that ensures equity and financial relief. However, for higher-income families, the same policy is perceived as a "Social Limitation" that restricts their ability to provide high-standard celebrations. This finding aligns with Walgito's theory, where background factors significantly shape the interpretation of external stimuli. Thus, the effectiveness of education policies is deeply intertwined with the economic reality of the target audience.

V. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that socio-economic status is a primary determinant in shaping parents' perceptions of the school farewell restriction policy. First, parents in the upper-middle-class strata (SMA Xaverius Pahoman) maintain a positive yet critical perception (62% support). While they acknowledge the policy's intent, a significant portion (38%) shows resistance, perceiving the regulation as a limitation on quality standards and social prestige. This reflects the influence of internal factors such as lifestyle and social expectations, as suggested by Bimo Walgito's theory.

Second, parents in the lower-middle-class strata (SMA Negeri 8) exhibit a highly positive and homogenous perception, with 93% support. They interpret the policy as a vital form of economic protection. Applying William N. Dunn's evaluation criteria, this group considers the policy highly appropriate as it effectively alleviates the financial burden of non-academic expenses and removes social pressure from mandatory levies. For this group, the sustainability of this policy is essential for ensuring long-term financial predictability in education.

Finally, the comparative analysis reveals a statistically significant difference in perception between the two economic strata, evidenced by a Chi-Square significance value of 0,000 ($p < 0,05$). These findings highlight a real socio-economic dynamic where *pro-poor* policies receive stronger support from lower-income groups, while higher-income groups remain more selective due to a clash between social equity values and consumerist lifestyle orientations. Ultimately, this research emphasizes that the effectiveness of public policy is deeply dependent on its alignment with the financial realities of the target population. This study suggests that future policies should consider more nuanced communication strategies to bridge these differing socio-economic expectations.

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