

The Impact of the 5 Day School Policy: Can Local Tourism Rise Again?

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Abstract:

This study examines the impact of the Five Day School policy on local tourism in North Sumatra, integrating perspectives from international educational theories and Indonesian education experts. Implemented in accordance with Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 23 of 2017, the policy mandates approximately eight hours of study per day from Monday to Friday, aiming to improve learning effectiveness, foster self-development, and stimulate domestic tourism through extended weekends. The research adopts a qualitative case study approach, involving in depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis with stakeholders from the education and tourism sectors. Findings reveal that the policy presents both opportunities and challenges across psychological, social, curricular, infrastructural, institutional, religious, economic, and regulatory dimensions. While the condensed weekly schedule may support tourism growth and extracurricular engagement, prolonged daily hours risk fatigue and reduced learning efficiency if not managed effectively. Expert insights from Bjork, Dewey, Sweller, Rosyada, and Shihab emphasize the importance of balancing instructional time, meaningful activities, rest periods, and socio-cultural considerations. This study's novelty lies in connecting educational policy analysis with tourism development and socio-cultural dynamics at the provincial level. The findings offer strategic recommendations for aligning educational reforms with local economic revitalization while preserving cultural and community values.

INTRODUCTION

The policy regarding the regulation of the number of school days has been an evolving topic in various countries, with differing considerations according to each nation's social, economic, and educational contexts. Several countries have adopted shorter weekly learning systems with specific objectives deemed relevant to their respective conditions. (United States Department of Education, 2023) In the United States, for instance, the four-day school week policy has been implemented in approximately 1,600 schools across several states. The primary rationale behind its implementation is financial constraints, whereby reducing one operational school day is considered an effective means of saving both operational and other associated costs, without significantly compromising the quality of education. This policy is also viewed as providing students with more opportunities to rest and teachers with additional time to better prepare instructional materials.

(Australian Department of Education, 2023) In Australia, the implementation of a four day school week is driven by a significant shortage of teachers in several regions. By reducing the number of school days, it is expected that teachers' workloads will be lightened, while enabling a more efficient allocation of resources. Meanwhile, (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale France, 2023) France is among the European countries that have adopted the four-day school week, prompted by several reasons. First, it provides students with longer rest periods to support their physical and mental well being. Second, it reduces school operational costs. Third, it opens up opportunities for students to participate in more varied extracurricular activities, including project-based learning. In some regions of France, this policy is also associated with a desire to focus students on practical and exploratory activities, such as visits to science centers, handicraft production, and nature-based excursions in forests.

(Kementerian Pendidikan Kebudayaan Riset dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2023) In Indonesia, the government introduced the Five Day School policy, under which students attend school from Monday to Friday with extended learning hours each day, thus making weekends (Saturday and Sunday) non school days. Several reasons underpin this policy. First, the government recognizes the significant potential to boost the domestic tourism sector by granting the public, including families and students, longer leisure time. The extended weekend starting from Saturday is expected to stimulate the mobility of domestic tourists to visit local destinations, both within and outside their cities. Second, the policy aims to provide students with opportunities for self-development through non academic activities such as courses, arts, sports, or religious engagements that can enrich their experiences and skills. Third, it is expected to curb negative youth behaviors, such as street fighting, involvement in motorcycle gangs, and drug abuse, by directing their free time toward more constructive activities.

Specifically in North Sumatra, the Five Day School policy holds considerable relevance. This province is renowned for its diverse tourism potential, ranging from iconic natural attractions such as Lake Toba, Sipiso-piso Waterfall, and Taman Alam Lumbini, to cultural tourism such as traditional Batak villages and local festivals, as well as culinary tourism that attracts both domestic and international visitors. The existence of a longer weekend could serve as a golden opportunity to increase local tourist visits, particularly for families seeking quality time together outside their regular school and

work routines. Given the relatively short travel distances between districts and cities in North Sumatra, the potential for interregional tourist movement is also quite high.

However, an important question arises: to what extent does this policy genuinely impact the revival of local tourism, particularly in the post Covid 19 pandemic period, which severely disrupted the global tourism industry? While the policy’s objectives are commendable, its actual impact in the field must be verified through empirical research. Not all families may utilize the additional days off for tourism, as other factors such as economic conditions, travel costs, and weekend activity preferences also play a role. Moreover, the readiness of local tourist destinations to capitalize on this opportunity is a critical factor. Without adequate promotion, sufficient infrastructure, and affordable tourism packages, the potential increase in tourist visits may not be fully realized.

Experiences from other countries indicate that changes in school schedules can trigger shifts in how communities utilize their free time. In France, for example, longer breaks are used for project-based activities that enrich students’ learning experiences, including educational tourism. If the Five Day School policy in Indonesia were integrated with educational tourism programs or collaborations between schools, tourism offices, and tourism industry stakeholders, the potential for increased tourist visits could be greater. Conversely, without cross-sector policy integration, the benefits for tourism might remain marginal.

In the context of North Sumatra, there is potential to strategically link this policy with local tourism promotion. For example, natural and cultural attractions could organize special programs or offer weekend discounts, local governments could develop educational tourism packages for schools, and local communities could be empowered as creative economy actors supporting the tourism sector. Such strategies could not only boost visitor numbers but also extend tourists’ length of stay and increase their spending at destinations.

Research on this topic is highly important because it involves two vital sectors simultaneously education and tourism. From an educational perspective, evaluating the Five Day School policy can help determine whether non-academic goals such as self-development and the prevention of negative behaviors are being achieved. From a tourism perspective, this research can reveal the extent to which the sector is able to recover and leverage education policy to increase visitor numbers, business revenues,

and contributions to local revenue.

Furthermore, this research holds strategic value in supporting regional economic recovery in the post-pandemic era. Tourism is one of the sectors most affected during the global health crisis and requires stimulus from various stakeholders to recover. If proven effective, the Five Day School policy could serve as a model of synergy between education policy and tourism development, which could be replicated in other provinces with similar potential.

Considering these factors, this study will not only provide academic contributions but also practical benefits for local governments, tourism industry players, and communities. Governments can use the research findings to optimize cross-sector policies, tourism industry players can develop relevant marketing strategies and service packages, while communities can reap economic and social benefits from the increase in local tourism activities. Therefore, examining the impact of the Five Day School policy on local tourism in North Sumatra is relevant, urgent, and strategically significant.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to explore the impact of the *Five Day School* policy on local tourism in North Sumatra. The qualitative method was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of perceptions, experiences, and responses from various stakeholders in both the education and tourism sectors. The research was conducted in selected areas with high tourism potential, such as Lake Toba, Berastagi, and Medan, involving purposively selected participants, including education and tourism officials, school principals, teachers, local tourism business owners, and parents.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews explored stakeholders' perspectives on the policy's influence on weekend activities and tourism participation, while direct observation at tourism sites documented visitor flow, activities, and facilities. Document analysis included reviewing tourism statistics, official policy documents, and relevant media reports. Data analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) framework, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with thematic coding to identify key patterns such as changes in travel behavior, economic impacts, and utilization of students' free time.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria: credibility through triangulation of sources and methods, transferability through detailed contextual descriptions, dependability via systematic documentation of research procedures, and confirmability by maintaining researcher reflexivity and separating personal opinions from findings. This methodological framework allows for a holistic and reliable exploration of how the *Five Day School* policy influences local tourism recovery and development in North Sumatra.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

5 Countries with the Shortest School Hours

Based on the provided data, there are significant variations in the average daily school hours among several countries with the shortest school durations. Russia implements approximately 4-5 hours of schooling per day (around 08.00-13.00/14.00), and Finland applies roughly ± 5 hours (08.00-13.00/14.00). Other countries such as Iceland, Ireland, and Singapore typically have 5-6 hours of school per day. These durations reflect a relatively shorter learning period compared to Indonesia, allowing students more leisure time and potentially creating opportunities for extracurricular activities, rest, and personal development outside the classroom.

In contrast, Indonesia, under the *Five Day School* policy (Monday-Friday) regulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 23 of 2017, mandates a minimum of 8 hours of effective learning per day, totaling 40 hours per week, including break times. This makes Indonesia’s daily school hours notably longer compared to the aforementioned countries. The longer school day in Indonesia is intended to maximize learning within fewer school days, provide opportunities for extracurricular and religious activities, and potentially boost domestic tourism by offering two consecutive weekend days off. However, the extended daily schedule may also limit students’ energy and available time for other pursuits after school hours.

From a comparative perspective, countries with shorter daily school hours, such as Russia and Finland, often emphasize quality over quantity, integrating effective teaching strategies, smaller class sizes, and balanced schedules that accommodate rest and enrichment activities. Meanwhile, Indonesia’s approach leans toward maintaining a high total learning time within fewer school days, which aligns with policy goals such as

strengthening character education, reducing juvenile delinquency, and supporting economic sectors like tourism. These differing approaches highlight the trade-offs between instructional time and students’ out-of-school life, and they underscore the importance of assessing how scheduling policies influence broader social and economic objectives.

5 Day School Time Policy in North Sumatera

The data show that North Sumatera has begun implementing the *Five Day School* policy for senior secondary levels (SMA, SMK, and SLB) in accordance with the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 23 of 2017. This policy stipulates approximately 8 hours of learning per day, including break times, from Monday to Friday, for a total of 40 hours per week. However, the same policy has not yet been applied to primary and junior secondary levels (SD and SMP) in the province, as the daily duration for these levels has not been officially determined or announced.

From an implementation standpoint, this approach aligns with the national objective to condense the learning week while maintaining the total weekly instructional time. Compared to international practices such as Russia (4-5 hours/day), Finland (± 5 hours/day), and other countries like Iceland, Ireland, and Singapore (5-6 hours/day) North Sumatera’s senior-level daily duration is considerably longer. While this allows the province to match total weekly hours in fewer days, it may also result in longer, more intensive school days that could affect students’ after-school engagement and energy levels.

The differentiation in application between education levels suggests a phased or selective implementation strategy. By applying the *Five Day School* system first to senior secondary education, the province may be assessing its operational feasibility, impact on students’ academic performance, and potential influence on community activities, including tourism and extracurricular involvement. In contrast, maintaining the traditional schedule for SD and SMP may reflect considerations around younger students’ learning endurance and developmental needs. This staged approach offers a natural opportunity for comparative study between the levels to evaluate the broader social, educational, and economic effects of the policy before a full scale rollout.

5 Day School Problems and Solution

Table 1.

Key Issues, Impacts, and Recommended Solutions for the Five Day School Policy in North Sumatra

Aspect	Main Issue	Impact	Proposed Solutions
Psychological	Student/teacher fatigue	Decreased focus and learning motivation	Adjust daily schedules with adequate breaks; provide counseling and wellness programs.
Social	Children unsupervised on weekends	Potential gadget addiction	Organize community-based weekend programs involving sports, arts, and volunteering.
Curriculum	Limited space for extracurricular activities	Neglect of non-academic skills	Integrate extracurricular sessions into school hours; strengthen collaboration with external trainers.
Infrastructure	Inadequate school facilities	Disruption of comfort and hygiene	Allocate budget for facility upgrades; implement regular maintenance programs.
Institutional	Administrative and workload burden on teachers	Burnout and reduced teaching quality	Streamline administrative tasks; employ support staff for non-teaching duties.
Religious	Clash with non-formal religious education schedules	Weakening of spiritual values education	Coordinate with religious institutions to align schedules and maintain religious learning opportunities.
Economic	Additional costs for meals/transport	Increased financial burden on families	Provide school meal subsidies; coordinate affordable transport options with local operators.
Regional Regulation	Lack of local legal framework	Inconsistent implementation between regions	Draft and enact local regulations to standardize policy application across districts.

The challenges identified span multiple dimensions psychological, social, curricular, infrastructural, institutional, religious, economic, and regulatory. A major concern is the potential decline in students’ and teachers’ well-being due to extended

daily school hours, which can reduce focus and enthusiasm for learning. Socially, the lack of structured weekend activities could lead to unsupervised leisure time and excessive gadget use among students. Curricular limitations risk undermining the development of essential non-academic skills, while infrastructural inadequacies may compromise the comfort and hygiene of the learning environment.

From an institutional perspective, the increased administrative burden could contribute to teacher burnout, lowering the quality of instruction. Religious considerations also play a role, as the new schedule may conflict with established non-formal religious education, potentially eroding spiritual values among students. Economically, the policy may impose additional costs on families, particularly in meals and transportation. Finally, the absence of a unified regional legal framework creates inconsistencies in policy implementation across different districts in North Sumatra.

A holistic approach is required to address these issues. For psychological and social challenges, schools could implement well-being programs, adjust daily timetables, and create structured weekend activities in collaboration with communities and local organizations. Curricular gaps can be closed by integrating extracurricular activities into the formal timetable and partnering with external trainers to enhance non-academic skill development. Infrastructural improvements demand targeted budget allocations and consistent maintenance schedules.

Institutionally, streamlining administrative processes and employing support staff can reduce teacher workload, preserving instructional quality. Religious scheduling conflicts should be resolved through dialogue and coordination with local religious institutions. To ease economic burdens, subsidies for school meals and partnerships with transport providers can be introduced. Finally, the provincial government should prioritize drafting and enacting local regulations to ensure uniform implementation of the Five Day School policy across all districts, thereby improving consistency, equity, and overall effectiveness.

Discussion

The findings indicate that implementing the *Five Day School* policy in North Sumatra presents both opportunities and challenges across psychological, social, curricular, infrastructural, institutional, religious, economic, and regulatory dimensions

(Utara, 2025). From a psychological standpoint, Robert Bjork’s concept of *desirable difficulty* and the *spacing effect* emphasizes the importance of breaks and rest in supporting long-term memory retention and deep understanding. While the policy condenses learning into fewer days, the extended daily hours may inadvertently increase fatigue among students and teachers, reducing the cognitive benefits that breaks are meant to provide.

From an educational philosophy perspective, John Dewey argued that schools must prepare students for real life, which includes time management, life balance, and social participation. This aligns with the idea that a school schedule should not only prioritize academic instruction but also foster opportunities for community engagement, extracurricular activities, and real-world skill development. However, the current structure of the policy, if overly focused on maximizing classroom hours, may undercut these broader educational objectives.

John Sweller’s Cognitive Load Theory warns that overly intensive instruction without sufficient processing time diminishes learning effectiveness. This resonates with the observed risk in North Sumatra, where prolonged daily schedules might lead to cognitive overload rather than enhanced learning. Similarly, Dede Rosyada stresses that while the Five Day model can be beneficial, it must be sensitive to the social and cultural needs of Indonesian students, particularly in a religious and communal society where weekends also serve as important times for spiritual education and community bonding. Najeela Shihab further adds that extended time in school must be filled with meaningful activities encompassing project-based learning, character education, and creative expression rather than simply lengthening students’ seat time without enriching their experiences.

(Waspada, 2025) When viewed collectively, these expert perspectives underline the importance of balancing instructional time with rest, social development, and meaningful engagement. (Direktorat SMK, 2025) The North Sumatra case also highlights the necessity of aligning the policy with the region’s cultural and economic realities, ensuring that its implementation supports both educational quality and broader community life.

(Analisadaily.com, 2025) This study offers novelty by bridging international cognitive and educational theories such as Bjork’s *spacing effect*, Dewey’s life-

preparation philosophy, and Sweller’s cognitive load principles with localized socio-cultural considerations articulated by Indonesian education experts like Dede Rosyada and Najeela Shihab. Unlike previous research that primarily examines either the cognitive impact of school schedules or their socio-cultural implications in isolation, this study integrates both domains to assess the *Five Day School* policy’s multidimensional effects in a specific provincial context. The research contributes new insights into how a nationally mandated educational reform interacts with local tourism potential, community values, and infrastructural readiness making it a rare case that connects educational policy, socio-cultural dynamics, and economic sector revitalization within the same analytical framework.

Public concerns arise because full-day schooling is feared to undermine existing structures, such as Islamic school education. This will undoubtedly impact community and child empowerment. This research will further explore the implementation and challenges of the full-day school system (Setyawan et al., 2021). The full-day school system has 11 positive and 6 negative impacts on elementary school students (Rizka Fikri Nabilah, 2024). Most students are happy because they have more time to rest and develop their non-academic potential at the weekend. However, some students feel tired with busy schedules, especially during the day, which reduces their enthusiasm and motivation for learning. Overall, the implementation of the five school day rule at SMAN 4 Kediri City has both positive and negative impacts on student learning motivation (Pebriana, 2025).

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the *Five-Day School* policy in North Sumatra, particularly at the senior secondary level (SMA/SMK/SLB), has broad implications for psychological, social, curricular, infrastructural, institutional, religious, economic, and regulatory aspects. Regulated under Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 23 of 2017, the policy prescribes approximately eight hours of study per day from Monday to Friday, aiming to enhance learning effectiveness, provide opportunities for self-development, and support local tourism by granting longer weekends.

A comparison with countries such as Russia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, and Singapore reveals that Indonesia’s daily learning duration is considerably longer. While

this aligns with the government’s objective of maintaining total weekly instructional hours, it carries the risk of student and teacher fatigue, as well as reduced time for non-academic activities, if not balanced with appropriate time management and engaging learning methods. Insights from experts Bjork, Dewey, Sweller, Rosyada, and Shihab highlight that the success of this policy depends greatly on balancing study time, rest intervals, meaningful activities, and adaptation to the local socio-cultural context.

This study offers a novel contribution by integrating international educational theories and perspectives from Indonesian education experts into a provincial-level policy analysis, while also linking it to the potential development of local tourism. The findings emphasize that successful implementation requires adjustments to scheduling, enrichment of extracurricular activities, improvement of infrastructure, coordination with religious institutions, economic support for families, and the establishment of a clear local legal framework. With the right strategies, the *Five-Day School* policy can serve as a model for synergy between improving educational quality, preserving socio-cultural values, and fostering regional economic recovery through the tourism sector.

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