

School resilience through quality management in early childhood education: a case study from Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Poor management of the education system can cause a decrease in school quality. Moreover, the increasing of similar institutions in early childhood education (ECE) in Indonesia gives a school must have good resilience. These institutions must ensure that the educational programs they provide to children are of high quality, thus earning the trust of preschool parents. This article aimed to highlight the importance of paying attention to school management. Therefore, schools that already have good resilience need to be studied to have an impact on schools that are in the stagnant category. The method used was a case study with in-depth interviews. The results indicate that the resilience schools use four strategies to remain resilient. These strategies include having quality human resources, unique school programs, and school promotion. The research results highlight the importance of quality human resource management, superior programs such as foreign language learning and international curricula, and effective promotion in maintaining the resilience of educational institutions amidst competition.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The resilience process for school institutions aims to measure and strengthen infrastructure, culture, and education systems while contributing to their resilience [1]. School resilience refers to a school's ability to adapt and develop in the face of challenges and change. Teachers, students, and parents are also essential in building student resilience because they are resources that can attract society [2], [3]. Therefore, school resilience is closely related to the quality of education provided.

Resilient schools are not only able to survive and compete with similar institutions but also to remain tolerant of various inequalities that exist in society [4]–[6]. This shows that resilient schools focus on academic excellence and can respond to complex social and environmental challenges. New environments and overcoming issues of legitimacy, rigor, and relevance are challenges for schools to adapt [7]. Schools must maintain their legitimacy as respected and recognized educational institutions. In addition, they must also ensure that their academic standards remain high and reliable. The curriculum and programs must also align with market needs and demands to improve their ability to remain competitive [8], [9]. Therefore, resilience is closely related to the existence of a branding process and a management style that is not too bureaucratic [6].

A robust branding process can help schools gain trust and support from various parties. Branding is a unique strategy that can encourage achieving maximum academic quality. Schools need to differentiate

themselves from competitors and build a special place in the hearts of students and parents to impact the new student registration process.

A robust branding process can help schools gain trust and support from various parties. Branding is a unique strategy that can encourage achieving maximum academic quality [10]. Schools need to differentiate themselves from competitors and build a special place in the hearts of students and parents to impact the new student registration process by integrating cost leadership strategy, differentiated strategy, and student recruitment strategy [11]. Meanwhile, a less bureaucratic management style refers to a more flexible, innovative, and adaptive managerial approach, allowing the organization to be more responsive to changes and challenges. It can provide a conducive environment for innovation, leading to more effective and efficient performance and a competitive advantage. Less bureaucratic also had been reported can successfully achieved change success in Saudi public sector leaders [12]. A less bureaucratic management approach often encourages the adoption of new ideas, collaboration, and faster decision-making, all of which can improve an organization's ability to adapt and survive in the face of changing situations.

One of the educational institutions that currently needs resilience amidst the many similar institutions that continue to develop is early childhood education (ECE). These institutions must ensure that the educational programs they provide to children are of quality so that parents of preschool children can trust them. Early childhood children have the right to access good quality education to facilitate their abilities and development and needs to be more equitable [13]. Higher levels of early childhood education and care quality are associated with improved academic outcomes, behavioral skills, social competence, and motor skills [14]. Further, previous study found that early childhood education quality has small overall effect sizes, but lasting associations with academic development over children's school career in language, literacy, and mathematics [15]. Therefore, a child's overall development and performance at school are influenced by the quality of the experience provided by ECE [16], [17]. This experience will influence brain development from an early age, impacting development and learning in a better direction [18].

Quality ECE practices should help children to be better prepared to enter the early grades of primary school. This condition will be achieved if ECE has teachers with appropriate knowledge to work in ECE, care, development, philosophy, and practice. The availability of quality ECE can support maximum learning and development. High quality in ECE significantly benefits cognitive, language, and social development [19], [20]. Meanwhile, ECE with low quality can pose harmful risks to children's development [21]. A high-quality ECE environment has also been reported to help children from families with low socioeconomic status overcome various behavioral problems caused by family stress [22], [23]. Those who do not have a strong foundation early in life are unable to overcome these various problems and are afraid to experience setbacks as they grow older [24], [25].

Furthermore, school quality influences parents' decisions [26]. Even though they are not directly involved in observing the school's activities, the decision to choose ECE is based on brief observations and indirect experience. This includes information on various services and programs the school provides parents. Apart from that, they will also consider the classroom's hygienic conditions and physical layout. The availability of a good and attractive playground for children is also a consideration for parents regardless of their knowledge of how the teaching program is provided. Apart from that, teacher-child interaction, child welfare, and child safety are some of the characteristics of quality ECE, according to parents [27], [28].

Quality refers to various things that are very complex in an education system because of the various components involved in it [29]. ECE quality can be viewed from two aspects, namely structural quality and process quality [30]. Structural quality includes educators and children, the number of students, environmental management, educators' professional development, and educators' welfare. Meanwhile, the quality of the process includes interactions, learning opportunities, activities, and daily care and education practices so that they can provide authentic experiences to children because they influence their welfare and development. UNICEF has provided an assessment instrument to evaluate the quality of ECE practices called 'a framework and tool box for monitoring and improving quality' [31]. The instrument explains that the quality of ECE can be seen from seven components. These components are the physical learning environment, teaching and learning processes, teacher quality, curriculum, school readiness results, leadership, and parental and community involvement. If the school can fulfil this component, it is ready to be resilient amidst the many similar institutions that are developing.

Further, Indonesian people's awareness of the importance of enrolling children in ECE to optimize their development is increasing, accompanied by an increase in the number of working mothers, encouraging the government to continue to optimize the number and quality of services for families and children [32]. However, the quality of ECE in Indonesia faces several challenges. Indonesia's education system is vast, but there is a need to move beyond increasing access to education and focus on achieving high-quality education [33]. The concerns about whether child care facilities are running well and following best practices are increasing as the number of child care facilities in a country increases [34]. One of the challenges is poor

management of the education system, especially in remote areas, which causes the quality of education and student motivation to be low [35]. This condition is caused by not all ECE in Indonesia having a sound management system, which impacts the learning process and its results. Another challenge is teachers' need for more competence and skills in implementing inclusive education for children with special needs [36]. Apart from that, the lack of information and preparation for accreditation is also a challenge for improving the quality of ECE institutions [37].

The next problem related to the quality of ECE in Indonesia is the need for qualified teachers. This is shown by the fact that some teachers still need the appropriate educational background [38]. On the other hand, higher teacher qualifications are significantly correlated with higher quality ECE and care environments, positively impacting overall qualities [39]. Nevertheless, the welfare of teachers in childcare institutions also influences the overall quality of the services provided. Low teacher salary is significantly associated with poorer classroom management and instruction quality in early care and education settings [40]. Regarding salary and other facilities, teacher welfare can influence teacher motivation to provide the best educational services for children. In other words, the appreciation received by teachers influences the implementation of the educational process in schools. Therefore, improvements are needed in the management practices of ECE institutions, including planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling.

Many previous studies have reviewed articles discussing early childhood education management. Akdag and Haser revealed that early childhood education teachers have a fear of not being able to manage the classroom before starting their careers because they feel unprepared. It can be because they feel unprepared for classroom management due to a lack of practical approaches, poor preparation for behavioral issues, and minimal evidence-based training [41]. These concerns may arise from a lack of experience or sufficient training, as well as uncertainty about how they will handle situations that may occur in the classroom. Furthermore, innovative leadership in early childhood education requires systematic planning, teamwork, and creative ways of working and understanding digital information, resulting in quality learning services [42]. This process is essential for school principals because they coordinate the achievement of the school's vision and mission. However, school principals are reported to need help with organizational leadership, especially in managing staff. This can lead to staff turnover and a decrease in the quality of programs for children [43]. Good school management will also influence the process of stimulating children's development [44]. However, research which has studying strategies so that schools can be popular with the public by offering various superior programs is still lack. This article highlights the importance of paying attention to the curriculum, learning process, teachers, and school management in ECE. In particular, the objectivity of this study is to describe the management efforts that schools have made to provide quality services so that they remain resilient amidst the number of similar institutions that continue to develop. To support this idea, this study asks the following two research questions:

- i) How does the school manage educators and teaching staff?
- ii) How does the school manage educational and institutional programs?

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with case study techniques. This technique was chosen because it is most suitable for examining various problems related to the quality of ECE in Indonesia so it can be known how the quality of ECE will be investigated in-depth, detail, and detail. Therefore, this research will obtain information on the curriculum, learning process, teacher recruitment, and general institutional management. Some of these aspects can directly or indirectly influence school quality.

Information was obtained from teachers and school principals from two ECE institutions in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The subjects consisted of two school principals and six teachers. A small number of participants allows for a more detailed and nuanced exploration of each case. For instance, Mason et al. discuss how detailed, in-depth qualitative analysis can provide rich insights even with a small number of cases [45]. Each subject involved in this research was interviewed in a different place and time to avoid any feelings of discomfort between subjects. In determining research subjects using the case study method, researchers must consider the criteria for selecting research subjects. The purposive sample technique is used to determine the research subject. Then, the specific criteria are as: i) teachers teach in institutions that have excellent educational programs such as second language education programs (English, Arabic, or Mandarin), multicultural cultivation from an early age, and *tahfidz* programs for Islamic-based schools; ii) selected participants have taught for at least more than one year; and iii) selected participants teach in one of the age groups at ECE institutions. After the participant selection criteria were determined, the researcher used a purposive sampling technique based on the determined criteria. The study involved school principals and teachers aged around 30-45 years when collecting samples. These participants come from private institutions, so their salaries come from contributions made by their children and families.

The data was obtained using in-depth interviews conducted over two days. The first interview lasted 120 minutes. During the interview, the researcher asked several questions about the research objectives previously explained, namely management of educators and teaching staff in schools, student management, management of educational programs and institutions, and obstacles encountered in the school management process. Further, data collection instruments in this study include pre-interviews, in-depth interviews, and observation. The researcher developed the instrument and verified it with two experts before data collection was carried out. These two experts come from the ECE department. Interview guidelines are used to obtain information related to school quality. These guidelines are prepared based on the content standards for ECE services in Indonesia. Each statement described by the subject was recorded using a cellphone recording device. In-depth interviews were conducted to collect primary data for this study. Six questions were asked to participants about how to manage educators and teaching staff in schools, manage students, manage educational programs and institutions, and obstacles encountered in the school management process. The researcher followed the classroom learning from start to finish. Several things that need to be observed are classroom management, teaching techniques used by the teacher, and children's responses.

The data that has been collected is then transcribed to make it easier to identify what sub-themes emerge. The same sub-themes are then combined into a theme. The final step is to determine conclusions according to the topic being studied. Data obtained through the case study method were analyzed using the theme analysis model proposed by Braun and Clarke. The general procedure for data analysis consists of three stages, namely i) data collection; ii) data coding; iii) theme identification; iv) theme review; v) theme writing; vi) theme analysis; and vii) report writing.

The first step is data collection. At this stage, researchers collect data relevant to the research topic obtained through interviews, observations, or documents. The second stage is coding the data by providing labels or categories for emerging themes. The third stage is to identify themes that emerge from the data. These themes can be identified inductively (data-driven) or deductively (theory-driven). The fourth stage is to review the themes that have been identified to ensure that they fit the data. The fifth stage is writing the themes that have been identified and explaining how these themes are related to the research questions. The sixth stage is theme analysis, which explains how these themes are related to the research questions. The final step is writing a report explaining how the identified themes influenced your research results and their implications for the research question and emphasis.

The validity of qualitative study results refers to the nature of the validity of the data from the interview results. To confirm statements from participants, researchers carried out several stages to ensure the validity of the results in the study. First, the bracketing process (epoch) begins. This process avoids personal judgment in research. Second, using member interview transcripts, the researchers checked with them to ensure they understood the researcher. Therefore, interview transcripts in Microsoft Word format were sent to the participants for review. During the horizontalization process, researchers return codes to participants as research collaborators after they have removed unimportant information. Third, researchers make subjective statements, which include opinions about how teachers assess early literacy in children. Before data analysis was carried out, a subjectivity statement was written. Therefore, the researcher's assessment may change after the analysis because the participants' experiences must be considered. In the fourth or final step, the researcher conducted interviews with focus groups and checked the assessment planning documents to ensure the data was correct.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis shows that four management strategies were found based on the results of interviews with teachers. These are quality human resources, unique school programs, and school promotion. These three strategies will be discussed in depth in the following description.

3.1. Quality human resources

First, according to school principals and managers involved in this research, schools have teachers as implementers of the educational process and their organizational structure for educational staff. These educational staff assist in managerial processes outside the classroom, such as providing information, school promotion, financing, curriculum, teacher and education staff development, and school development. The presence of educational staff helps teachers focus more on classroom problems.

“Apart from the principal, we have human resource development, curriculum developer, there is also an accountant who takes care of financial payments and so on, then below the accountant, there is a front office, he is also a cashier, receiving payments, then the academic one, that means under the curriculum developer is directly the teacher.” (P1)

Apart from that, educational staff also include information technology and health and cleaning service staff. All human resources are selected using structured stages. These stages are a written test, English, then an ecological test, micro-teaching, stage one interview, and stage two interview.

“Usually, the human resource management team will arrange things like recruitment and posters, then we usually send them, for example, share them on Instagram, or for example, on the website, we also have a website. Then it is the same as, on, like jo, street, or career.com; that is usually how it is.” (P1)

Even though both institutions reveal a selection process, there are differences between the two. School A stated that people who could become teachers at the school had to be graduates with a background in English, psychology, or ECE. Meanwhile, school B stated that teachers could come from junior high school graduates. The principal of school B revealed that the primary criterion for selecting a teacher was the person's motivation. If the motivation to teach comes from the heart, skills can be trained, as can be taught with academic degrees.

Second, provide regular training. Not all teachers have an educational background. Therefore, the school prepares training plans periodically every semester. Training is carried out at school and outside school. If training is carried out at school, this is a scheduled human resource development agenda. If the training is carried out outside the school, the event is organized by an association of ECE teachers, in which the school actively participates. Third, providing rewards and punishment for teachers.

“So, for example, what will come in later, from ECE, well that also, needs to be known, how does the English skill? If it is still lacking, the English language must be improved again, for example, with training. If it is for English, maybe it is pedagogical skills that need to be improved, especially in early childhood. If it is a holiday, we schedule it for training. So, for the second semester, we also have training. Like that. Usually, if it is internal, it comes from the foundation for the training program.” (P1)

Fourth, the principal is a facilitator when teachers and parents experience misunderstandings. The principal revealed that he mediates when there are conflicts between teachers and parents. Confirming with each party is the first thing the school principal will do. After that, the teacher can determine whether he can complete it himself. If not, the principal asks the teacher to share problems with colleagues so they are more comfortable discussing them. Intervention from the school leader or principal will be given if the problem is in the category that cannot be resolved.

The results of the data analysis show that one way to remain resilient amidst the many similar institutions that continue to develop is to have quality human resources. This is supported by previous studies that reveal that human resource management, such as effective staff placement and training, can improve the quality of education [46]. Moreover, training carried out periodically can form proactive and reactive human resources to increase individual and organizational resilience. A training program centered on resilience and well-being enhanced motivation, overall resilience, professional commitment, self-efficacy, school support, and work well-being among teachers [47]. Strategic human resource management aims to develop the organization's ability to face severe challenges or shocks by strengthening the skills and competencies of core employees [48], [49]. When these skills are combined and utilized throughout an organization, the organization will be better able to respond to and overcome difficult situations or problems.

Apart from teachers, having a competent principal also influences school resilience. The role of the school principal becomes crucial when there are problems between teachers, parents, and students. Whether the conflict is resolved or not will affect the satisfaction of parents as users of educational services. School leadership playing a significant role in the reality of satisfaction received by parents as users [50]. Does this reality match the expectations they had at the start of school? Apart from that, it also affects the psychological well-being of teachers. Conflict is one of the everyday things that teachers and school principals will face. The principal plays a boundary-spanning role by providing support and mediation when conflict occurs and encouraging parental support. Mediation is an effective method for resolving conflicts within the school environment, promoting understanding, acceptance, and solidarity between the involved parties [51]. For parents, mediation encourages clear and honest communication, helping them better understand their child's perspective as well as the school's standpoint. This leads to more effective collaboration and problem-solving. Additionally, mediation addresses issues in a constructive manner, reducing tensions and preventing conflicts from escalating. By participating in mediation, parents can build trust with school staff and other parents, reinforcing the idea that the school environment is supportive and collaborative. Therefore, school principals play an essential role in resolving conflicts by deliberating, taking a middle path, giving advice, strengthening ties, and compromising with various parties [52].

3.2. Unique school program

School A revealed that they selected superior programs based on environmental characteristics. Because the school was located in an area with minimal services for using foreign languages, English became one of the superior programs offered to the community. Therefore, this school is often a reference for children who have recently moved from abroad. Parents who have just moved are looking for a school that can facilitate their children's language, most of whom use English. The following source expresses this.

"I want to open a daycare, but it uses full English because there are few in Yogyakarta. We are usually guest speakers at events like that. Every year, we hold 1-2 guest speaker events like that." (P1)

Not only are students given English language familiarization, but teachers are also given training to improve their English proficiency. Second, a combination of curricula is used. Participants stated that the British curriculum made applying the independent curriculum currently used in Indonesia easier because of several similar principles. One is to emphasize free and broad learning behavior patterns in children. Children can explore the themes being studied more deeply. At the end of the theme, the children worked on the theme peak or exit point with a celebration or presentation, as stated by the following participant.

"The curriculum we use is the International Early Years Curriculum combined with the national curriculum." (P1)

Third, the inclusive school program. This program answers the various needs of people who have children with special needs. Even though school A does not dare to reveal that it is an inclusive school, they do not refuse if there are children with special needs who want to study at that school. They prefer to call their school a child-friendly school.

"Yes, so yes, what, it is more like this, yes, when it comes to inclusion, we do not dare yet, what, what is it, the term is claiming that our school is inclusive, but it is more like we are a friendly school, that is it, friendly, friendly, what, children special needs, or something like that. So yes, it is more like we will try to do our best to provide services for all children without exception." (P1)

The principal of school B also expressed the inclusive school program. Inclusion at School B places more emphasis on the value of inclusivity itself. This program is motivated by the understanding that life will become more diverse in the future. The human population will increase with various backgrounds. This situation will encourage competition, and children must be ready to survive. For this reason, children must be able to determine how to behave to survive, as stated by the following resource person.

"Our vision is to help realize that young children can appreciate the values of inclusiveness. So, there is a story of this vision that in the future, life will be different from now. There will be more and more humans. It is approaching eight billion people, and natural resources, land for food, materials, energy, and so on, will be increasingly scarce. So, in the future, many experts predict that we will be forced to live in very narrow spaces. However, the irony is that we have agreed that there should be no more killings like before. We already have human values that dictate that we should live together and not hurt each other." (P2)

To compete with other institutions, schools must also design superior programs such as learning services in total foreign languages, a combination of international curricula, and inclusive services. Moreover, parents believe that early English education enhances children's language development, gives them a competitive advantage, and improves their cognitive skills [53], [54]. They also know the benefits of learning a foreign language for children. Additionally, most of them agree that learning a second language is more accessible for children, and they do not think it has a destructive impact on their mother tongue or personality [55]. By integrating language learning into enjoyable activities, children are more likely to engage and retain new languages. This approach supports a holistic educational experience, where children develop language skills in a stress-free environment, promoting overall emotional and social wellbeing. Even so, preschool teacher encounter challenges such as native language barriers, classroom management issues, low student readiness, and a lack of experience [56]. Therefore, they need to be given training, as expressed by school A. School A provide foreign language training to teachers periodically. A qualified teachers should teach foreign languages to preschool students, but more training is needed for effective inclusion. Preparing future teachers for digitalization in early foreign language learning is essential to effectively incorporate digital tools into the education of preschool children [57], [58].

Furthermore, the use of an integrated national and international curriculum. International content in national curricula helps students cope with cultural diversity more quickly, but non-Western curricula may be more challenging for local students [59]. Combining global and local curricula can offer technical support for creating a glocalized school-based curriculum [60]. Furthermore, the curriculum using the international curriculum focuses on developing skills through various approaches. An international curriculum is reported to attract more parents to send their children to a school [61]. Parents consider that schools that implement an international curriculum better prepare their children to face the capacities of the 21st century. This implies that parents consider the international curriculum as a more effective means of preparing their children in terms of knowledge and skills relevant to the current era.

Furthermore, inclusive services are also a unique attraction for the community. The development of inclusive education in Indonesia shows better progress [62], [63]. Community development for inclusive education in kindergartens in Indonesia is average, but inclusive values are high [64]. Institutions that provide inclusive services have teachers with a critical role in identifying and determining interventions for children with disabilities. This service is essential, especially since not all schools are friendly to children's unique needs. Institutions that can provide this service help parents with children with special needs without worrying about not receiving an appropriate learning process. However, institutions must also ensure that the services provided to children follow the child's needs.

3.3. School promotion

School promotions are carried out in a well-planned manner. Schools hold events in public places such as shopping centers by holding activities suitable for young people. The school also tries to introduce the institution through posters and brochures in public places.

“Our marketing strategy from the foundation has our marketing team. So, the marketing team's job is to create events that are outgoing, outgoing. For example, holding a coloring competition at a mall or public place. Then, he was also tasked with distributing brochures. Then posters to perhaps places, for example, public places that children like that usually visit.” (P1)

Furthermore, the school held a trial class and open house program. This program aims to recruit new students by providing the opportunity to take part in learning for one day. Children who will become prospective students can participate in class lessons with existing students. Parents can see the learning process and the school's infrastructure during the trial class. However, open houses are held twice a year.

School resilience, so it remains popular with the community, is also promoted through a promotion system. Promotion is an effective way to communicate marketing to convey superior services and programs from school institutions. Marketing communications are essential in building school culture in developing countries [65]. Schools must be able to analyze what society is currently interested in, target users, and the use of digital technology. This follows previous studies, which reveal that education promotion involves identifying and fulfilling user needs [66]. The target service that will be provided is also one of the things that must be considered when determining a promotional strategy. If the target users are people with middle to upper economic levels, then a promotional strategy of holding children's events in shopping centers is the right choice. This promotional program can be an external marketing technique. Meanwhile, promotional strategies with open house events and trial classes are internal marketing techniques. Marketing management in educational institutions using internal, external, and interactive marketing can help build a positive image and overcome competition.

School promotions aim to attract students for the new school year. This activity is also essential so the public knows about the school's services. Therefore, its implementation requires a special design team so this program can run effectively. Marketing management in schools allows them to react more efficiently to environmental changes, new services, and successful market operations, resulting in better efficiency and quality [67]. Moreover, products and services, service prices, school location, school service processes and management, facilities and infrastructure, and human resources influence user satisfaction and loyalty. The absence of interviews with parents is one of the weaknesses of this research. The results of interviews from parents as users of educational services will strengthen the data obtained from teachers and school principals as planners. What the school is planning will have a real impact when users provide real comments.

4. CONCLUSION

The research results highlight the importance of quality human resource management, superior programs such as foreign language learning and international curricula, and effective promotion in maintaining the resilience of educational institutions amidst competition. The role of school principals in conflict resolution and adaptive marketing is the key to meeting community expectations and increasing user

satisfaction. This strategy allows educational institutions to remain relevant, maintain service quality, and compete in an increasingly competitive education market.

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