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Regulations and community participation in education funding at the elementary education level

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Keywords:	Abstract
local government regulations; community participation; education funding; elementary education; educational management	<i>This study examines the implementation of education funding regulations and community participation in the management of basic education funding in Pemalang Regency, Central Java. The study used a mixed-methods approach with a convergent parallel design, combining a quantitative survey of 203 basic education teachers and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with local education stakeholders. The data were analysed through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, followed by data integration. The results indicate that local government regulations on education funding are in the very good category, while community participation and the condition of education funding are in the good category. The results emphasise the need for a legal umbrella in the form of a Regional Regulation on the implementation of education that regulates the responsibilities of local governments and strengthens community participation. This study concludes that the success of education funding depends on strong regulations and effective collaboration among the government, the community, and educational institutions.</i>

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Education funding is a crucial component in the provision of education. Education funding that encourages optimal learning activities will impact the quality of education.

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Education funding needs to be viewed as a long-term investment that drives sustainable social and economic improvement (Budiana et al., [2025](#); Surya et al., [2025](#)). Investing in education is not just a consumptive activity, but a form of investment in human capital, which results in long-term returns in the form of increased skills, productivity and income. The state's commitment to education funding is affirmed in Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which mandates a minimum allocation of 20 percent of the national and regional budgets for education. This provision is further reinforced by Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (UU Sisdiknas), which requires the central and regional governments to guarantee the provision of quality education and to open up opportunities for community participation in the provision of educational resources.

Quality education can only be achieved if education funding is implemented in accordance with government standards, prioritizing transparency and accountability in line with statutory regulations. Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government stipulates that education is a mandatory basic service that must be prioritized in the Regional Budget (APBD). Effective, transparent, and accountable funding in educational institutions plays a crucial role in improving the quality of education (Wulaningsih & Asriati, [2024](#)), especially the provision of infrastructure, improving teacher competency, expanding access to quality education services, encouraging student academic achievement through equitable budget distribution and strengthening education governance. Education funding is understood as a shared responsibility between the government and the community, to be managed synergistically, transparently, and accountably to ensure the sustainability and improvement of education quality.

The complexity of educational issues is also evident in Pemalang Regency, Central Java Province, which has 1,754 educational units serving 270,407 students and supported by 13,124 teachers. This large educational ecosystem should be a potential source of human resource development. However, Pemalang's educational development has not kept pace with the size of this ecosystem, with the quality of human development lagging behind the provincial average (Beritasatu.com, [2025](#)). The state of education in Pemalang Regency also still faces serious challenges, particularly the low average length of schooling, which has a direct impact on the low Human Development Index (HDI) (Dimas, [2023](#)). As stated in the Pemalang Regency Draft Regional Regulation 2025-2045, in 2022, the Human Development Index (HDI) of Pemalang Regency was recorded at 67.19, lower than the average HDI of Central Java Province of 72.79, while the average length of schooling for residents only reached 6.5 years, equivalent to the first semester of junior high school education, this indicates the low educational attainment of the people of Pemalang Regency with the majority of the population having not completed basic education. Low educational participation, if not addressed seriously, will affect the poor quality of human resources, weakened workforce competitiveness and productivity, hampered economic growth, increased social inequality,

and heightened community vulnerability to various social problems (Martsha & Disman, [2024](#)). Strengthening fair, effective, and sustainable education funding policies and governance is a key prerequisite for encouraging increased educational participation and accelerating improvements in the quality of human resources in Pemalang Regency.

On the other hand, the number of children not attending school (ATS) and dropping out of school in Pemalang Regency is still relatively high, as seen from the 2021 data of 237 ATS with only 26 children returning to school, and the 2022 data of 2,177 ATS with 92 children willing to continue their education. Therefore, handling this requires a persuasive approach and collaboration between the government and the community. This phenomenon is influenced not only by economic factors but also by social factors, learning motivation, and limited geographic access. The Pemalang Regency Government prioritizes education by overseeing its implementation, strengthening the roles of principals and teachers, and encouraging collaboration between schools and parents to ensure students continue their education to higher levels. Study stated that school participation rates can be increased through the expansion and strengthening of conditional social assistance programs such as the Family Hope Program (PKH), which significantly encourages the continuation of children's education, especially at the elementary and junior high levels. The high number of out-of-school children (ATS) has the potential to significantly hamper regional social and economic progress and have long-term negative impacts on children's personal development and future (Nurjto & Supardal, [2025](#)). Addressing the problem of unschooled and drop-out children in Pemalang Regency requires a comprehensive, sustainable, and collaborative strategy to ensure that all children receive their right to education in an inclusive and equitable manner.

The main problems in funding management include limitations in the quality and quantity of human resources, the large budget allocation absorbed for routine needs, and weak ability to explore alternative funding sources. Investment effectiveness also depends on the principle of fairness in budget allocation, in which educational institutions must understand financial sources, uses, and needs, and analyze data summaries to determine educational financial indicators, thereby identifying key financing areas and preventing the waste of funds (Hidayat et al., [2023](#)). Educational policies should be designed with consideration for social, economic, and geographic disparities to ensure equitable resource allocation and adequate support for disadvantaged and vulnerable communities (Amiri et al., [2025](#)). Moreover, there is still a need for optimization of funds to improve the learning quality (Maspupah et al. [2024](#)). Effective, equitable, and sustainable management of education funding is a key prerequisite for maximizing the benefits of educational investment to improve the quality of human resources and promote inclusive and equitable socio-economic development.

Furthermore, the theory of fiscal decentralization views local governments as key actors in designing education funding policies that are responsive to local needs (Alimuddin et al., [2023](#)). However, in practice, the effectiveness of fiscal decentralization depends heavily

on local governments' ability to manage and optimize available financial resources (Halawa et al., [2025](#)). Education funding is still dominated by central government policies and budgets, while regional governments' role is limited to distributing funds, with contributions from regions, the community, and students' parents on a limited scale (Hayida-o et al., [2025](#)). The participation of the community and parents significantly improves the quality of education in both financial and non-financial ways (Arifin et al., [2022](#)). This situation indicates that successful education funding within a fiscal decentralization framework requires strengthening local government capacity and increasing collaboration among the government, communities, and parents to ensure more effective, sustainable policies.

Various previous studies have discussed education funding from the perspective of national policy and school context (Ananda et al, [2025](#); Emiyati et al, [2022](#), Masjhur; Neti Karnati, [2022](#); Hardian, [2025](#)). However, its implementation is still limited in examining the context of regional regulations, community participation, and the characteristics of basic education in the region. This research is expected to enrich the body of public policy and education funding studies by providing a contextual understanding of education funding practices in the region. This research can serve as a consideration for local governments in formulating more effective, equitable, and sustainable education funding policies.

The Problem of The Study

This study focuses on how education funding regulations and community participation are implemented in elementary school education funding management, and the extent to which the two interact to support the effectiveness and fairness of education funding management. Specifically, this study examines: 1) how Pematang Regency government regulations relate to education funding; 2) how community participation in education funding is implemented; and 3) the profile of elementary education funding in the region.

Research's State of the Art

Literature shows that education funding supports improvements in educational quality. However, research integrating regulatory implementation, elementary school-level financial management practices, and the actual role of communities in regional contexts with complex education issues remains limited. This study explores regulations and community participation in basic education funding management at the regional level to address issues of equitable access and sustainable improvements in education quality.

Novelty, Research Gap, & Objective

Research that integrates studies on the implementation of regional regulations, community participation, and basic education funding practices in a contextual context is still limited. This study examines education funding regulations and community participation in supporting the effectiveness, equity, and sustainability of basic education funding at the regional level, an area that has not been widely explored in previous studies. This study aims to analyze the implementation of education funding regulations, examine the forms and roles

of community participation, and identify challenges in basic education funding that hinder equitable access and improve the quality of education.

METHOD

Type and Design

This research was conducted using a mixed mixed-methods approach, by combining quantitative and qualitative methods. This approach allows for data triangulation and is expected to provide a more comprehensive description of research results. Quantitative methods were used to measure the profile of government regulations, community participation, and education funding from the teacher's perspective. Meanwhile, qualitative methods were used to explore the meanings and in-depth views of regional stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities of effectively and collaboratively funding education.

The research design used is Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods, in which quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously and analyzed separately. The results of the data analysis are then integrated into the interpretation stage. The stages of this research include:

1. The quantitative stage was conducted through a questionnaire survey regarding government regulations, community participation, and education funding in the region.
2. The qualitative stage is carried out through *Focus Group Discussion* (FGD) regarding the challenges of funding education.
3. The integration stage is carried out by combining the analysis results of the two methods to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

Data and Data Sources

This research was conducted in Pemalang Regency, Central Java, with participants comprising teachers and education stakeholders.

1. The respondent population consisted of teachers from Early Childhood Education (PAUD), Elementary Schools (SD), and Junior High Schools (SMP) at both public and private levels. According to processed data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), there are 1,441 PAUD teachers, 6,556 at public and private elementary schools, and 2,783 at public and private junior high schools. The total population of elementary school teachers is 10,780. The sample size was calculated using the Jotform Sample Size Calculator with a confidence level of 85% margin of error 5%, so the sample in this study was 203 teachers.
2. Qualitative respondents were conducted through Focus Group Discussion involving representatives from 6 agencies, including representatives of HIMPAUDI, KEMENAG, PGRI PEMALANG, Dikdasmen, and PNF PDM Pemalang Council, BAPPEDA, Education Office, Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency (BPKAD) Pemalang Regency.

Data Collection Technique

The research instruments used in this study consisted of questionnaires and interview guidelines to collect quantitative and qualitative data on education funding in Pemalang Regency.

1. The questionnaire was used to measure respondents' perceptions of the adequacy of education funding, the principle of justice, the role of local governments, and partnerships and funding innovation, with Cronbach's Alpha values for each local government education finance regulation of 0.91, community participation in education of 0.86, and challenges of education funding of 0.80, all of which are above 0.70 so they have high reliability.
2. Interview guidelines were used to explore informants' views and experiences regarding funding challenges and the potential of the Pemalang area.

Data Analysis

This research began with the licensing and stakeholder coordination stages through the Pemalang Regency DPRD. The next stage was FGD and data collection through questionnaires. For quantitative data, the assessment category range of 1–5 scale used is as follows: An average value of 4.21–5.00 is very good, 3.41–4.20 is good, 2.61–3.40 is sufficient, 1.81–2.60 is poor, and 1.00–1.80 is very poor. The collected data were analyzed in the data analysis and integration stage, using a quantitative approach with descriptive statistics and a qualitative approach through thematic analysis. Furthermore, the results of both approaches were integrated to strengthen the conclusions.

RESULTS

1. Quantitative Data

a. Regional Government Regulations

The results of the questionnaire regarding government regulations are displayed in the following table:

Table 1. Regional Government Regulation Data

Items	Minim um	Maxim um	Mean	Std. Deviatio n
Reporting	1.50	5.00	4.42	0.62
Clarity	1.50	5.00	4.29	0.65
Supervision	1.67	5.00	4.49	0.58
Government Regulation	1.55	5.00	4.39	0.57

Based on the descriptive statistics, the Regional Government Regulation variable had an average of 4.39 and a standard deviation of 0.57, indicating that respondents' perceptions of regulations were very good. Overall, these results indicate that the

implementation of regional government regulations, particularly in the areas of supervision, reporting, and clarity, was perceived by respondents to be running well.

b. Community Participation

The results of the questionnaire regarding community participation are displayed in the following table:

Table 2. Community Participation Data

Items	Minim um	Maxi mum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Usage	2.00	5.00	4.22	0.67
Donations	1.00	5.00	3.65	0.82
Partnership	1.00	5.00	4.19	0.71
Concern	2.00	5.00	4.19	0.66
Community Participation	1.75	5.00	4.02	0.57

Based on these descriptive statistics, the overall community participation score had a mean of 4.02 with a standard deviation of 0.57, indicating a good level of community participation. These results demonstrate that community participation has been well-functioning, particularly in terms of utilization, partnership, and awareness, although contributions in the form of donations (financial and non-financial) still need to be improved.

c. Education Funding

The results of the questionnaire regarding educational funding received by schools are displayed in the following table:

Table 3. Education funding Data

Items	Minim um	Maxi mum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Adequacy	2.00	5.00	4.03	0.56
Equality	1.00	5.00	4.02	0.78
Education Funding	2.00	5.00	4.03	0.56

Based on these descriptive statistics, the overall funding score was 4.03 with a standard deviation of 0.56, indicating that respondents rated the funding situation as good and relatively consistent. These results indicate that funding is considered sufficient and relatively equitable, although some respondents still gave low ratings, particularly regarding equity.

2. Qualitative Data

Results of Focus Group Discussion. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), local governments, educational institutions, professional organizations, and other stakeholders demonstrated the need to develop a legal framework in the form of a Regional Regulation (Perda). The Regional Regulation must clearly define local government responsibilities, ensure adequate education funding, and establish mechanisms to meet minimum service standards without burdening the public. Furthermore, the formulation of policy direction should not only focus on funding but also provide opportunities for community participation in education through non-financial channels.

The FGD results also confirmed that various education stakeholders need concrete support from local governments. Schools under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, most of which are private, still require strengthening infrastructure and incentives for non-civil servant educators. HIMPAUDI and IGTKI (Indonesian Teachers' Association) advocated for increased funding for Early Childhood Education (PAUD) and the provision of sustainable incentives for non-formal PAUD teachers. The Muhammadiyah religious organization proposed that private schools also have equal access to local government programs.

From a policy perspective, there is a view that a regional regulation on education administration that encompasses aspects of community participation and education funding is necessary. The regional government, through the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) and the Regional Development Planning Agency (BPKAD), emphasizes the need to calculate regional education cost standards proportionally so that funding gaps can be addressed with a strong legal basis, for example, through regional grants. Furthermore, community participation is deemed necessary to be strengthened while remaining within the legal framework to avoid misinterpretation. A new regional regulation is needed that is expected to accommodate the principles of Ki Hajar Dewantara's Three Centers of Education, strengthen collaboration between the government, educational institutions, the community, and religious institutions, and ensure sustainable funding through synergy between the regional budget (APBD), central government programs, community participation, and other alternative sources.

3. Data Integration

Quantitative data indicate that the implementation of regulations, community participation, and the overall condition of education funding have been functioning quite optimally, although there are still differences in respondents' perceptions of assessments, especially regarding community contributions and funding equity. Qualitative results from FGDs strengthen these findings by emphasizing the need for a legal umbrella in the form of Regional Regulations (Perda) that regulate local government responsibilities, ensure adequate funding, and strengthen targeted community

participation. In addition, stakeholders also emphasized the importance of concrete support for educational units, increased incentives for educators, and funding synergy between local governments, the central government, and the community to ensure the sustainability of education provision.

DISCUSSIONS

The results of the study indicate that local government regulations regarding education funding are in the very good category, while community participation and education funding are in the good category. This finding indicates that the existence of clear regional regulations can serve as a foundation for managing education funding, enabling planning, implementation, and monitoring processes to run more effectively. This supports previous research by Ruff et al. (2023), which found that effective public policies in education funding can increase social mobility, especially for students from the lowest economic groups, while maintaining education quality assurance indicators, thereby improving the quality of education and the country's progress. In addition, strategic management model functions not only as an administrative planning tool but also as a conceptual framework that integrates instructional improvement, data-informed decision-making, and stakeholder engagement at the elementary school level (Musodik et al., 2025). Regulations regarding education sector funding are very likely to be carried out by local governments, where, fiscal decentralization strengthens the authority and responsibility of local government spending, increases the efficiency of financial resource allocation, and has a broad and unique impact on local government spending behavior. This finding also aligns with the research of Hutasoit et al. (2025), which states that regulation is one aspect of fulfilling the right to education.

Furthermore, to improve accountability in education management, clear regulations, oversight, and transparent reporting are crucial factors. This discussion emphasizes that accountability in education funding depends not only on the availability of funds but also on a transparent and structured management system. This aligns with the concept of education financing management as, who state that it is the process of managing funding sources, their use, and accountability within educational institutions, encompassing budget preparation, financing implementation, and auditing. Furthermore, this also aligns with the research findings of Arsal and Hidayat (2023), which state that existing funding sources are allocated to support operational activities, development, and quality improvement of educational institutions.

However, the research results show variations in community contributions (financial and non-financial) and the distribution of educational funding in each school, this indicates the need for increased community participation in supporting the implementation of education, considering that as stated in Permendikbud No. 75 of 2016, community participation is an important component in educational funding, as long as fundraising and

educational resources are mutual assistance and donations. This was also observed by Matete (2022), who found that financial contributions from parents and community members are challenging in themselves due to a lack of awareness of the importance of education for their children. Furthermore, schools need to make the community a strategic partner, in which community involvement plays an important role in helping schools carry out the educational process optimally, ultimately producing quality education in accordance with the objectives of its implementation. Found, the education financing management system, community participation, and principal leadership affect school quality. Moreover, Huda et al. (2026) stated that policies should encourage principals to balance the leadership style, particularly at the elementary school level where collaborative and supportive environments are critical. In conducting school activities, principals need to pay more attention to implementation and evaluation, while teachers are required to be ready to support the activity (Trisiani et al., 2025).

Results (Focus Group Discussion) The FGD further emphasized the importance of drafting Regional Regulations (Perda) as a legal umbrella to clarify local government responsibilities, strengthen community participation, and ensure the adequacy and sustainability of education funding, including for private educational units and educational institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. These findings indicate that regional policies play a strategic role in addressing education funding needs that national policies have not fully accommodated. As found in research by Masuda et al. (2022), regional governments need to balance public-sector involvement in partnerships and form new intermediaries to strengthen collaborative networks. Furthermore, research by Salsabila (2025) found that Regional Regulations on Education play a crucial role in ensuring the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of education by outlining the stages of planning, detailing, discussion, ratification, and implementation. Which argues that education funding regulations need to be reformed to enable the government to provide a strong, stable, and sustainable funding system, ensuring educational resources are more equitable and adequate for students from underprivileged areas. These findings indicate that, in addition to serving as an administrative instrument, strengthening regional education regulations is a collaborative strategy involving the government, the community, and educational institutions to improve the quality of education, supporting the research of Tirtaningrum et al. (2025). Therefore, the success of education policy is determined not only by strong regulations but also by synergy between stakeholders in their implementation.

CONCLUSION

Strengthening local government, community participation, and education funding are important aspects in supporting the implementation of sustainable education. The results of the study indicate that local government regulations, community participation, and funding

conditions are in the good category. In addition, education stakeholders consider the importance of a more comprehensive legal umbrella through Regional Regulations (Perda) on education implementation to increase community participation and equitable funding, thereby improving education quality. The regional regulation is expected to clarify local government responsibilities, ensure the adequacy and sustainability of education funding, and strengthen collaboration between the government, educational units, and the community. The success of education implementation is determined not only by regulations but also by partnerships between stakeholders. Future researchers can examine models of equitable regional education funding policies, the effectiveness of education implementation, and community participation strategies that support the quality and equity of education.

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