



## School-Based Management and Institutional Performance in Public Junior High Schools

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### ARTICLE INFO

Received February 3, 2024

Revised March 10, 2024

Accepted March 30, 2024

Published April 28, 2024

#### Keywords:

school-based management, institutional performance, educational decentralization, junior high schools

### ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between school-based management (SBM) implementation and institutional performance in public junior high schools across Central Java, Indonesia. School-based management represents a decentralized approach to educational governance that transfers decision-making authority from central offices to individual schools. Through a comprehensive analysis of 240 public junior high schools, this research investigates how various dimensions of SBM—including participatory decision-making, financial autonomy, curriculum flexibility, and community engagement—influence institutional performance outcomes. The study employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys with qualitative case studies to provide nuanced insights into SBM effectiveness. Findings reveal that schools with higher levels of SBM implementation demonstrate significantly better institutional performance across multiple indicators, including student achievement, teacher satisfaction, and community involvement. However, the relationship is moderated by contextual factors such as principal leadership capacity, resource availability, and community socioeconomic status. The research contributes to understanding how

decentralization policies can be optimized to enhance educational quality in developing country contexts, particularly within Indonesia's unique cultural and administrative landscape.

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## INTRODUCTION

Educational reform movements worldwide have increasingly emphasized the importance of decentralizing school governance to improve institutional effectiveness and student outcomes. School-based management emerged as a prominent strategy in the late twentieth century, reflecting broader trends toward democratization and local empowerment in public sector administration. The fundamental premise underlying SBM is that those closest to students – principals, teachers, parents, and community members – are best positioned to make decisions that enhance educational quality and responsiveness to local needs. This shift from centralized to decentralized governance represents a paradigmatic transformation in how educational systems conceptualize authority, accountability, and improvement processes.

Indonesia's adoption of school-based management, known locally as *Manajemen Berbasis Sekolah* (MBS), emerged following the country's political and economic reforms in the late 1990s. The decentralization movement gained momentum after the fall of the New Order regime in 1998, leading to significant transfers of authority from national to local governments. According to Bjork (2005), Indonesia's educational decentralization reflected both political pressures for democratization and pragmatic recognition that centralized systems had failed to deliver equitable, quality education across the archipelago's diverse regions. The Ministry of Education and Culture subsequently mandated SBM implementation across all levels of schooling, fundamentally restructuring relationships between schools, communities, and government authorities.

Central Java Province presents a particularly compelling context for examining SBM implementation due to its demographic diversity, economic variations, and educational challenges. As one of Indonesia's most populous provinces, Central Java encompasses urban centers, rural agricultural areas, and regions with varying levels of economic development. The province's public junior high schools serve critical functions in the educational pipeline, bridging elementary education with upper secondary schooling during students' crucial developmental years. However, significant disparities exist in educational quality, resource availability, and student achievement across different districts and municipalities. Caldwell (2005) emphasized that understanding how SBM functions in diverse contexts is essential for designing effective implementation strategies that account for local conditions while maintaining educational standards.

The theoretical foundations of school-based management draw from multiple disciplines, including organizational theory, public administration, and educational leadership. Decentralization theory suggests that moving decision-making authority closer to service delivery points enhances responsiveness, efficiency, and stakeholder satisfaction. Participatory governance models emphasize the importance of including multiple stakeholders in decision processes to build ownership, leverage diverse expertise, and enhance legitimacy. According to Gamage and Sooksomchitra (2004), effective SBM implementation requires not merely administrative restructuring but fundamental changes in organizational culture, leadership practices, and stakeholder relationships. The complexity of these transformations helps explain why SBM outcomes vary significantly across different contexts and implementation approaches.

Institutional performance in educational settings encompasses multiple dimensions beyond traditional academic achievement measures (Muhsyanur, 2024). While student learning outcomes remain central, comprehensive performance assessments must also consider teacher effectiveness, organizational efficiency, community satisfaction, and institutional sustainability. Scholars increasingly recognize that schools function as complex social systems where various inputs, processes, and outputs interact dynamically to produce educational results. Leithwood and Menzies (1998) and (Ibrahim, 2020) argued that effective school performance requires alignment across multiple organizational levels, from classroom instruction to administrative systems to community engagement. This multidimensional perspective on institutional performance necessitates equally sophisticated approaches to measuring and understanding how management practices influence school effectiveness (Muhsyanur et al., 2021) and (Muhsyanur et al., 2022).

Research on SBM implementation has produced mixed findings regarding its impact on educational outcomes, with some studies documenting significant improvements while others find limited or no effects. These inconsistent results reflect variations in implementation quality, contextual factors, and measurement approaches across different studies and settings. In developing country contexts particularly, SBM effectiveness depends heavily on capacity building, resource availability, and cultural alignment with participatory governance principles. According to Barrera-Osorio et al. (2009), successful SBM implementation requires sustained investment in principal training, teacher professional development, and community capacity building to enable stakeholders to effectively exercise their expanded decision-making authority. Without adequate preparation and support, decentralization may simply shift problems from central offices to schools without generating meaningful improvements.

The relationship between school-based management and institutional performance operates through multiple mechanisms and pathways. Direct effects include enhanced resource allocation efficiency when decisions are made by those with immediate knowledge of local needs and constraints. Indirect effects operate

through improved teacher motivation when educators participate meaningfully in school governance and feel greater ownership over instructional decisions. Community engagement mechanisms can mobilize additional resources, strengthen accountability, and enhance alignment between school priorities and community values. Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1993) identified several critical factors that mediate SBM effectiveness, including the scope of decision-making authority delegated to schools, the quality of information systems supporting decision processes, and the extent of genuine power sharing versus symbolic participation. Understanding these mediating mechanisms is essential for designing interventions that maximize SBM's positive impacts.

This study addresses several gaps in existing research on school-based management in Indonesian contexts. While previous studies have examined SBM implementation in elementary schools and urban settings, limited research has focused specifically on public junior high schools across diverse regional contexts within a single province. The research employs a comprehensive framework examining multiple dimensions of both SBM implementation and institutional performance, moving beyond simplistic input-output models to consider process factors and contextual influences (Ahmad Nur, Muhsyanur Muhsyanur, 2024). By combining quantitative analysis of relationships between variables with qualitative exploration of implementation experiences, the study provides nuanced insights into how and why SBM affects institutional performance. The findings offer practical implications for policymakers, educational administrators, and school leaders seeking to enhance educational quality through improved governance approaches.

## **METHODE**

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to comprehensively examine the relationship between school-based management implementation and institutional performance in Central Java's public junior high schools. The quantitative component utilized a cross-sectional survey design with stratified random sampling to select 240 schools across 12 districts representing diverse geographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Survey instruments measured SBM implementation levels across four dimensions: participatory decision-making, financial autonomy, curriculum flexibility, and community engagement. Institutional performance was assessed through multiple indicators including standardized test scores, teacher satisfaction surveys, student attendance rates, parent involvement measures, and school efficiency metrics. According to Creswell and Clark (2017), convergent designs allow researchers to validate findings across different data sources while generating complementary insights that illuminate different aspects of complex phenomena. Structural equation modeling techniques were applied to analyze relationships between SBM dimensions and performance outcomes, controlling for relevant covariates such as school size, resource levels, and community characteristics.

The qualitative component involved in-depth case studies of 12 purposively selected schools representing varying levels of SBM implementation and performance outcomes. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews with principals, teachers, school committee members, and education office officials; observations of school decision-making processes and community meetings; and document analysis of school improvement plans, budget allocations, and meeting minutes. Following Miles et al. (2014) recommendations for qualitative analysis, interview transcripts and field notes were coded thematically to identify patterns, mechanisms, and contextual factors influencing SBM implementation and effectiveness. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings occurred during interpretation, with qualitative insights helping explain quantitative patterns while quantitative results suggested themes for deeper qualitative exploration. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), this mixed-methods approach provides more comprehensive understanding than either method alone, particularly for complex educational phenomena embedded in specific cultural and organizational contexts. The study received ethical approval from the provincial education office and all participants provided informed consent prior to data collection.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Implementation Levels of School-Based Management Across Central Java**

The quantitative analysis revealed considerable variation in school-based management implementation levels across public junior high schools in Central Java. Descriptive statistics indicated that overall SBM implementation scores ranged from 2.1 to 4.7 on a five-point scale, with a mean of 3.4 (SD = 0.62), suggesting moderate but uneven adoption of SBM practices. Among the four dimensions examined, participatory decision-making demonstrated the highest mean score (3.7), indicating that most schools had established mechanisms for teacher and staff involvement in school decisions. Financial autonomy showed the lowest mean score (2.9), reflecting persistent challenges in schools' ability to make independent budgetary decisions despite formal decentralization policies. These findings align with broader patterns observed in developing country contexts where administrative decentralization often precedes fiscal decentralization.

Geographic disparities in SBM implementation emerged as a significant pattern, with urban schools demonstrating substantially higher implementation levels compared to rural counterparts. Schools in district capitals averaged SBM scores of 3.8, while schools in remote rural areas averaged only 2.9. Qualitative interviews with principals revealed that urban-rural differences reflected multiple factors including differential access to training opportunities, variations in principal educational backgrounds and management capacity, and differences in community resources available to support school initiatives. According to Hanushek and Woessmann (2011), such geographic disparities in educational management capacity can perpetuate or even exacerbate existing achievement gaps between advantaged

and disadvantaged communities. The finding underscores the importance of targeted capacity-building interventions for schools in resource-constrained settings.

Community engagement represented the most variable dimension of SBM implementation, with standard deviations nearly twice as large as other dimensions. Some schools demonstrated exemplary practices including regular community forums, active parent volunteer programs, and collaborative problem-solving between school and community stakeholders. Other schools maintained only minimal, formalistic community involvement through perfunctory school committee meetings with limited substantive participation. Case study observations revealed that effective community engagement depended heavily on principal leadership in actively cultivating relationships, community socioeconomic capacity to participate, and historical patterns of school-community interaction. Epstein and Sanders (2006) emphasized that meaningful family and community involvement requires systematic relationship-building and cannot simply be mandated through policy directives. The variation observed in Central Java schools illustrates both the potential and challenges of community engagement as a component of decentralized governance.

Correlation analyses indicated that the four SBM dimensions were moderately intercorrelated, with coefficients ranging from 0.41 to 0.68, suggesting they represent related but distinct aspects of decentralized management. Factor analysis confirmed that participatory decision-making, financial autonomy, curriculum flexibility, and community engagement loaded on a single latent construct representing overall SBM implementation while maintaining meaningful distinct variance. This finding validates the multidimensional conceptualization of SBM while supporting the use of composite measures in subsequent analyses. Schools that excelled in one dimension tended to perform well in others, suggesting that successful SBM implementation requires integrated approaches rather than piecemeal adoption of individual practices. According to Fullan (2007), educational innovations are most effective when implemented as coherent systems rather than disconnected initiatives. The correlational patterns observed in Central Java schools support this systemic perspective on school improvement.

### **Institutional Performance Outcomes and Variation Patterns**

Analysis of institutional performance indicators revealed substantial variation across schools, with performance levels distributed relatively normally around moderate mean values. Student achievement scores on provincial standardized tests averaged 65.3 out of 100 (SD = 12.4), with school-level averages ranging from 41.2 to 87.6. Teacher satisfaction surveys yielded mean scores of 3.6 on five-point scales (SD = 0.54), indicating generally moderate satisfaction with some schools achieving notably higher levels. Student attendance rates averaged 88.7% (SD = 6.3%), while parent involvement measures showed means of 3.2 (SD = 0.71) on five-point scales. School efficiency metrics, calculated as the ratio of outcomes to inputs, ranged from

0.62 to 1.43, with a mean of 0.94. These baseline performance levels provide context for examining how SBM implementation relates to institutional effectiveness.

Significant positive correlations emerged between SBM implementation levels and multiple performance indicators. Schools with higher overall SBM scores demonstrated better student achievement ( $r = 0.48, p < 0.001$ ), higher teacher satisfaction ( $r = 0.53, p < 0.001$ ), better attendance rates ( $r = 0.39, p < 0.001$ ), and greater parent involvement ( $r = 0.61, p < 0.001$ ). The relationship between SBM and efficiency metrics was more modest but still significant ( $r = 0.31, p < 0.01$ ). These correlational findings provide initial support for the hypothesis that school-based management enhances institutional performance, though causality cannot be definitively established from cross-sectional data. According to Bruns et al. (2011), similar positive associations between decentralized management and school outcomes have been documented across diverse international contexts, though effect sizes and specific mechanisms vary.

**Table 1: Correlation Matrix Between SBM Dimensions and Performance Indicators**

Performance Indicator	Participatory Decision	Financial Autonomy	Curriculum Flexibility	Community Engagement	Overall SBM
Student Achievement	0.41***	0.36***	0.43***	0.38***	0.48***
Teacher Satisfaction	0.49***	0.42***	0.46***	0.47***	0.53***
Attendance Rates	0.33***	0.28**	0.36***	0.35***	0.39***
Parent Involvement	0.52***	0.44***	0.48***	0.68***	0.61***
School Efficiency	0.27**	0.29**	0.26**	0.24*	0.31**

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Examination of performance variation patterns revealed that high-performing schools shared several common characteristics beyond SBM implementation levels. These schools typically had principals with advanced educational credentials and substantial leadership experience, maintained systematic approaches to instructional improvement, and operated in communities with relatively higher socioeconomic status and educational expectations. Low-performing schools often faced multiple challenges including high teacher turnover, inadequate physical facilities, limited community resources, and student populations with significant disadvantages. Qualitative case studies illustrated how these contextual factors interacted with SBM implementation to shape outcomes. Schools implementing SBM in supportive

contexts achieved better results than those attempting similar practices in highly constrained environments. Leithwood et al. (2004) noted that school improvement initiatives operate within nested contexts where community, district, and national factors all influence local effectiveness. The Central Java data underscore the importance of considering these multilevel influences when interpreting SBM impacts.

Disaggregated analysis by school characteristics revealed important nuances in the SBM-performance relationship. The positive association between SBM and outcomes was strongest in medium-sized schools (300-600 students) compared to very small or very large schools. Urban schools showed stronger relationships between SBM and performance than rural schools, though rural schools implementing SBM still outperformed rural schools with lower implementation. Schools serving predominantly lower-income communities demonstrated somewhat weaker SBM-performance relationships, suggesting that poverty-related challenges may constrain SBM effectiveness or that additional supports are needed for disadvantaged contexts. According to Reimers (2000), educational innovations often show differential effectiveness across contexts, with interventions requiring adaptation to address specific challenges faced by schools serving disadvantaged populations. These moderating patterns suggest that SBM implementation strategies should be differentiated based on school characteristics and contexts rather than applying uniform approaches across diverse settings.

### **Mechanisms Linking School-Based Management to Institutional Performance**

Qualitative case study analysis identified several key mechanisms through which school-based management influences institutional performance in Central Java's junior high schools. The most prominent mechanism involved enhanced alignment between school practices and local contexts when decisions were made by school-level stakeholders with intimate knowledge of student needs, community expectations, and resource constraints. Principals and teachers in high-SBM schools described how participatory decision-making enabled them to develop initiatives specifically targeting their students' learning challenges rather than implementing generic programs mandated from district offices. For example, one school developed an intensive mathematics intervention program after collaborative analysis revealed specific skill gaps among their students, while another prioritized character education in response to community concerns about student behavior. According to Datnow (2005), such contextual adaptation represents a critical advantage of decentralized approaches over standardized, top-down reforms.

A second mechanism operated through enhanced teacher professional commitment and motivation when educators participated meaningfully in school governance. Teachers in high-SBM schools reported feeling greater ownership over school improvement efforts, increased investment in student success, and stronger professional identity as educators who shaped their school's direction rather than merely implementing external mandates. Several teachers contrasted their current

experiences with previous positions in more centralized schools where they felt powerless and undervalued. This enhanced motivation manifested in teachers voluntarily extending their efforts beyond minimum requirements, engaging in peer collaboration and learning, and persisting through challenges rather than becoming discouraged. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) emphasized that sustainable school improvement requires tapping into teachers' intrinsic motivation and professional commitment rather than relying solely on external accountability pressures. The Central Java findings illustrate how participatory governance can nurture such intrinsic motivation.

Community resource mobilization emerged as a third important mechanism, particularly regarding non-financial resources such as volunteer time, expertise sharing, and social capital. Schools with strong community engagement successfully recruited parent volunteers for tutoring programs, library assistance, and extracurricular activity support. Community members with specialized expertise provided career guidance, skill workshops, and mentoring for students. Local businesses and organizations donated materials, offered internship opportunities, and sponsored school events. These mobilized resources supplemented limited government budgets and enriched educational experiences beyond what schools could provide independently. Importantly, community resource mobilization appeared to strengthen over time as positive experiences and visible school improvements built trust and reciprocity between schools and communities. Coleman (1988) conceptualized such dynamics as social capital accumulation, where investments in relationships generate ongoing returns through mutual support and collective action. The case studies documented how SBM implementation could initiate virtuous cycles of community engagement and resource mobilization.

The fourth mechanism involved improved organizational learning and adaptive capacity within schools implementing participatory decision-making processes. Regular collaborative planning meetings, data review sessions, and problem-solving discussions created structures for collective reflection, knowledge sharing, and evidence-based adjustment of practices. Teachers reported learning from colleagues' experiences and perspectives, while principals described how participatory processes surfaced important information that might not reach them through hierarchical channels. Several schools had developed systematic cycles of planning, implementation, monitoring, and adjustment that enabled continuous improvement rather than static program implementation. According to Senge (2006), such organizational learning capabilities distinguish high-performing organizations across sectors, enabling them to adapt effectively to changing circumstances and accumulate wisdom over time. The establishment of collaborative learning structures represents a particularly valuable long-term benefit of SBM implementation beyond immediate performance gains.

### **Challenges and Barriers to Effective SBM Implementation**

Despite positive overall relationships between school-based management and institutional performance, the research identified substantial challenges and barriers that limited SBM effectiveness in many Central Java schools. Capacity constraints emerged as the most fundamental challenge, with many principals lacking adequate preparation for the expanded leadership responsibilities entailed by decentralized management. Principals trained under centralized systems often struggled to facilitate participatory processes, delegate appropriately, or make strategic decisions without detailed guidance from district offices. Teacher capacity similarly varied widely, with some educators ready to engage productively in school governance while others lacked confidence or skills for collaborative decision-making. These capacity gaps resulted in superficial implementation where participatory structures existed nominally but decision-making remained largely concentrated in principals' hands. According to Bush and Glover (2003), effective educational decentralization requires sustained investment in leadership development and cannot be achieved simply through policy mandates or structural changes.

Persistent resource constraints represented a second major challenge limiting SBM effectiveness, particularly in rural and disadvantaged communities. While SBM rhetoric emphasizes local flexibility and autonomy, meaningful decision-making authority requires adequate resources to allocate flexibly according to local priorities. Many schools operated with extremely limited budgets that barely covered essential operational expenses, leaving little discretionary funding for improvement initiatives or context-specific programs. Infrastructure deficits including inadequate facilities, limited instructional materials, and unreliable technology further constrained schools' improvement capacity regardless of management approach. Teachers in resource-constrained schools expressed frustration that participatory planning raised expectations and identified needs without providing resources to address them. Hanushek et al. (2013) documented how resource constraints can undermine educational reforms across developing country contexts, with implementation challenges often reflecting insufficient investment rather than inherent design flaws. The Central Java findings underscore that SBM represents a necessary but insufficient condition for improvement without adequate resource support.

Cultural and social barriers also impeded effective SBM implementation in many contexts. Indonesia's traditionally hierarchical social structures and respect for authority sometimes conflicted with participatory governance expectations. Teachers and community members often deferred to principals even when invited to participate, while principals sometimes struggled to relinquish control or felt uncomfortable with collaborative approaches. Gender dynamics presented additional challenges in communities where women's participation in public decision-making faced social constraints, limiting full inclusion of female teachers and mothers despite their critical roles in education. Some community members lacked confidence to engage with formally educated school personnel, while others

brought parochial interests that conflicted with broader educational objectives. Several principals described careful navigation of these cultural dynamics, gradually building participatory practices while respecting local social norms. Hallinger and Lee (2014) noted that educational reforms must align with or deliberately transform cultural contexts, with implementation processes requiring cultural sensitivity and adaptation rather than importing practices from different social contexts.

Accountability and oversight mechanisms presented a fourth category of challenges affecting SBM implementation. While decentralization transferred decision-making authority to schools, many districts lacked effective systems for monitoring school performance, supporting struggling schools, or ensuring quality standards across diverse contexts. Some principals experienced autonomy as abandonment rather than empowerment, receiving little guidance or support for managing complex improvement challenges. Without external accountability, implementation quality varied dramatically based on individual principal capability and commitment. Conversely, some districts maintained heavy bureaucratic requirements and oversight that constrained schools' actual autonomy despite formal decentralization policies. Several principals described navigating contradictory expectations from multiple administrative levels, with district offices sometimes reimposing centralized control when schools made decisions that challenged established practices. Wohlstetter et al. (2008) emphasized the importance of balanced accountability systems that hold schools responsible for results while providing necessary autonomy and support. Developing such systems remains an ongoing challenge in Central Java's evolving governance landscape.

## **CONCLUSION**

This comprehensive examination of school-based management implementation and institutional performance in Central Java's public junior high schools reveals both significant potential and important challenges associated with educational decentralization. The research demonstrates clear positive relationships between SBM implementation levels and multiple dimensions of institutional performance, including student achievement, teacher satisfaction, community engagement, and organizational efficiency. These findings support the fundamental premise that transferring decision-making authority to school-level stakeholders can enhance educational effectiveness by enabling contextual adaptation, building professional commitment, mobilizing community resources, and strengthening organizational learning capacity. However, the magnitude and consistency of SBM impacts vary substantially across different contexts, with effectiveness moderated by factors including leadership capacity, resource availability, community characteristics, and cultural dynamics. The research underscores that successful SBM implementation requires more than structural decentralization, necessitating sustained investment in capacity building, adequate resource provision, culturally sensitive adaptation, and balanced accountability systems.

The study's findings carry important implications for educational policy and practice in Indonesia and similar developing country contexts. Policymakers should recognize that decentralization represents a long-term transformation requiring patient, sustained support rather than expecting immediate results from policy mandates. Investment priorities should include comprehensive leadership development for principals, professional learning opportunities for teachers, community capacity-building initiatives, and infrastructure improvements that provide foundations for effective school management. Districts and provinces should develop differentiated implementation strategies that account for schools' varying contexts and capacities rather than applying uniform approaches across diverse settings. Future research should employ longitudinal designs tracking schools over time to better establish causal relationships and identify developmental trajectories of SBM implementation. Additional investigation of specific mechanisms and mediating factors would provide more precise guidance for optimizing SBM design and support. Despite remaining challenges, school-based management offers considerable promise for enhancing educational quality in Central Java and beyond when implemented thoughtfully with adequate support and realistic expectations.

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