



Financial Management of Early Childhood Education (PAUD): An Analytical Study of Funding Sources, RAPBS Preparation, and Financial Accountability

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ABSTRACT

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Financial management in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institutions is essential for ensuring sustainability and improving educational quality. However, challenges such as limited funding, weak financial administration, and lack of transparency are still common. This study aims to analyze the financial management cycle in PAUD, including funding sources, budgeting (RAPBS), implementation, and accountability. This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research method, drawing data from books, journals, and relevant documents. Data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative techniques. The findings indicate that effective financial management must be based on principles of transparency, accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, and participation. A systematic budgeting process, proper financial administration, and transparent reporting enhance public trust and institutional sustainability. Therefore, improving managerial competence and adopting adaptive financial systems are necessary to optimize financial governance in PAUD institutions

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INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) represents a crucial foundation in shaping the quality of a nation's human resources, particularly during the golden age period when cognitive, emotional, and social development occurs rapidly. The importance of this stage lies in its long-term impact on individual learning capacity and national competitiveness. Mulyasa (2018) emphasizes that investment in early childhood education significantly determines the effectiveness of education at subsequent levels. In Indonesia, this urgency is institutionally recognized through Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the

National Education System, which positions PAUD as a strategic pathway to optimize child development from birth to six years (Republik Indonesia, 2003). However, ensuring the quality of PAUD requires not only pedagogical excellence but also strong institutional governance. One essential aspect is financial management, which directly influences program sustainability, service quality, and stakeholder trust. Therefore, effective financial governance in PAUD is not merely an administrative necessity but a strategic component in achieving equitable and high-quality education outcomes for society.

Despite its recognized importance, PAUD implementation in Indonesia continues to face systemic challenges, particularly in financial management practices. Many institutions struggle with limited and unstable funding sources, which restrict their ability to maintain operational quality and expand services (Obilade & Akinsooto, 2025). In addition, financial governance in PAUD is often characterized by weak planning, insufficient documentation, and minimal accountability mechanisms. These issues are exacerbated by the fact that a significant number of PAUD institutions operate under community-based or non-formal structures, where managerial capacity and financial literacy are still developing. As a result, financial decisions are frequently made without strategic planning or long-term sustainability considerations. This condition creates a gap between policy expectations and practical implementation in the field. Without adequate financial management systems, PAUD institutions risk inefficiency, misallocation of resources, and declining stakeholder trust. Therefore, addressing financial governance issues is essential to ensure that PAUD institutions can function effectively and fulfill their developmental mandate.

Empirical evidence highlights the persistence of financial management challenges across various PAUD institutions in Indonesia. Research conducted by Hamidah et al. (2022) indicates that limited funding is often accompanied by weak administrative record-keeping and a lack of transparency toward parents or guardians. Similarly, community service findings by Supriatiningsih et al. (2022) in South Jakarta reveal that many PAUD managers are unable to systematically prepare School Revenue and Expenditure Budget Plans (RAPBS) and rarely produce standardized accountability reports. Furthermore, the study by Labobar et al. (2024) demonstrates that the adoption of digital financial platforms such as ARKAS remains uneven, particularly in remote areas where technical support and digital literacy are limited. These findings collectively illustrate a pattern of inadequate financial governance practices at the grassroots level. The persistence of such conditions indicates that financial management issues in PAUD are not isolated incidents but systemic challenges requiring comprehensive and context-sensitive solutions.

Previous studies have attempted to address aspects of financial management in educational institutions, particularly focusing on accountability, transparency, and governance frameworks. Mulyasa (2018) highlights the importance of professional financial management in ensuring educational quality, while Supriatiningsih et al. (2022) emphasize the need for capacity building among school managers to improve budgeting and reporting practices. Other studies, such as Maulana et al. (2024), examine financial accountability mechanisms but primarily focus on primary and secondary education levels. These studies contribute valuable insights into the principles of educational financial management; however, they often adopt a fragmented approach by addressing isolated components rather than the entire financial management cycle. As a result, the existing literature provides limited guidance on how financial processes should be integrated from planning to reporting, particularly in the context of PAUD institutions with unique operational characteristics and constraints.

The research gap becomes evident in the limited number of studies that comprehensively examine the full cycle of PAUD financial management, including resource identification, strategic planning through RAPBS, implementation, monitoring, and public accountability. Most existing research tends to overlook the distinctive nature of PAUD institutions, which include diverse forms such as kindergartens, playgroups, daycare centers, and other similar units, each with varying regulatory frameworks and funding dependencies. Additionally, the reliance on parental contributions and government assistance programs such as BOP introduces complexities that are not sufficiently addressed in current studies. The adaptation to digital systems like ARKAS also remains underexplored, particularly in terms of its practical challenges and effectiveness at the PAUD level. Consequently, there is a need for a more integrative and context-specific approach that bridges theoretical frameworks with practical implementation, ensuring that financial management practices in PAUD are both adaptive and sustainable.

This study offers a novel contribution by developing a comprehensive and integrative framework for PAUD financial management that encompasses the entire cycle from resource mobilization to accountability reporting. Unlike previous studies that focus on isolated aspects, this research emphasizes the interconnectedness of financial processes and the importance of aligning them with institutional characteristics and stakeholder involvement. It introduces a participatory approach in budget planning, encourages diversification of funding sources, and integrates digital tools within a structured governance model. The study also highlights the need for adaptive strategies that consider local contexts, managerial capacity, and technological readiness. By combining

conceptual analysis with practical guidelines, this research provides a more holistic perspective on financial governance in PAUD. The proposed framework is designed not only to improve efficiency and transparency but also to strengthen institutional sustainability and public trust, making it highly relevant in the current era of educational transformation and digitalization.

Based on the identified gaps and challenges, this study addresses the central research problem of how PAUD institutions can implement effective, transparent, and sustainable financial management practices within their unique operational contexts. The study argues that financial governance in PAUD must be approached as an integrated system rather than a series of disconnected activities. It proposes that the effectiveness of financial management depends on the alignment between resource identification, participatory planning, disciplined implementation, and standardized reporting mechanisms. Furthermore, the study posits that the integration of digital tools, such as budgeting and reporting platforms, can enhance transparency and accountability when supported by adequate training and institutional commitment. Through this approach, the research aims to contribute both theoretically and practically by offering a structured model that can be adopted by PAUD managers, policymakers, and stakeholders to improve financial governance and ultimately enhance the quality and sustainability of early childhood education services.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a library research design. This design was chosen because the focus of the study is on examining concepts, theories, and empirical findings that have been documented in various scientific literature, without conducting direct data collection in the field (Hagman, 2023; Oranga & Matere, 2023). The approach used is descriptive-analytical, which aims to systematically describe the facts and characteristics of the object of study, namely PAUD financial management, and then analyze the relationships among variables and derive meaning from existing findings (Barrak Dayeh & Yousif Mohammed, 2023; Sugiyono, 2019). The data sources in this study are secondary data, meaning data obtained indirectly through intermediary media in the form of written documents. The data collection technique used is documentation, which involves identifying, recording, and reviewing written documents relevant to the research focus.

The data analysis technique used is qualitative descriptive analysis. The analysis is carried out through several stages, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is conducted by selecting information relevant to the research focus, data display is presented in the form of systematic scientific narratives, and conclusions are drawn based on the

interpretation of the analyzed data. This approach is used to produce a comprehensive understanding of PAUD financial management practices both conceptually and practically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Concept of PAUD Financial Management

Financial management in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institutions is a series of activities in managing financial resources carried out systematically, planned, and continuously. Based on the literature review, PAUD financial management encompasses a complete cycle starting from planning, implementation, recording, supervision, to financial accountability (Mulyasa, 2018; Harahap & Syafina, 2024). This is in line with Mulyono (2018), who states that educational financial management cannot be reduced merely to administrative activities, but rather serves as a strategic instrument in achieving educational goals.

Key findings from the literature analysis indicate that the success of PAUD financial management is strongly determined by the implementation of five main principles, namely transparency, accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, and participation. The principle of transparency requires institutions to disclose financial information as widely as possible to stakeholders, especially parents. Arifin (2019) emphasizes that without transparency, public trust in PAUD

institutions will be difficult to build. Meanwhile, accountability implies that every unit of currency received and spent must be justifiable administratively, legally, and morally.

Research by Hamidah et al. (2022) in Jember Regency found that PAUD institutions that apply transparency and participation in financial management tend to have higher levels of parental satisfaction and lower dropout rates. This finding indicates a positive relationship between good financial governance and student retention.

In addition, PAUD financial management must also be oriented toward achieving early childhood education goals. Financial resources are positioned as supporting instruments that enable institutions to realize their vision, mission, and educational programs. Mulyasa (2018) emphasizes that every decision related to revenue and expenditure must consider its impact on the learning process and child development. Therefore, the use of funds must not only be economical but also targeted, effective, and aligned with institutional priorities. Critical Analysis: Although these five principles are conceptually well formulated, their implementation in practice often faces challenges. Supriatiningsih et al. (2022) report that most PAUD managers in South Jakarta

do not fully understand the difference between accountability and transparency. As a result, financial reports are often prepared merely as a formality to meet government reporting requirements, without adequate disclosure to parents.

This indicates a gap between what ought to be and what actually occurs in PAUD financial management.

Sources of PAUD Funding

PAUD financial management is an integrated and systematic process in managing institutional financial resources, starting from planning, implementation, recording, supervision, to accountability. Mulyasa (2018) emphasizes that financial management plays a strategic role because it is directly related to institutional sustainability and the quality of educational services provided to young children. The success of financial management is determined by the application of transparency, accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, and participation. Transparency requires institutions to disclose financial information to parents and the community, while accountability ensures that every use of funds can be justified administratively, legally, and morally (Arifin, 2019). Without these principles, public trust is difficult to establish and institutional sustainability is at risk.

PAUD funding sources come from various parties and can be classified into five main categories. First, government funding in the form of Operational Assistance for Implementation (BOP) PAUD, which is accompanied by technical guidelines and reporting obligations (Mulyono, 2018). Second, contributions

from parents, determined through mutual agreement while considering their economic conditions. Third, community and private sector support in the form of voluntary donations or partnerships. Fourth, institutional self-generated income such as selling children's work or organizing paid parenting programs. Fifth, grants from social institutions or educational organizations that are incidental and non-binding (Mulyono, 2018; Sinclair & Brooks, 2024).

The diversity of funding sources requires PAUD institutions to have proper recording systems and professional management to ensure optimal utilization of funds. Research by Hamidah et al. (2022) shows that institutions involving parents in determining contributions have higher payment compliance, highlighting the importance of participation.

The preparation of the School Revenue and Expenditure Budget Plan (RAPBS) is a crucial stage in PAUD financial management. RAPBS serves as a planning document outlining income sources and expenditure plans for one budget period, usually one academic year (Shiratuddin, 2019). The preparation process includes identifying revenue sources, identifying institutional needs and priorities, drafting the budget, conducting deliberations and approval, and disseminating the RAPBS to parents (Winoto, 2020; Susanto, 2023).

Preparation of the PAUD RAPBS

The preparation of RAPBS in PAUD is a critical financial planning stage. It functions as a comprehensive document outlining income sources and expenditure plans, serving as a guideline for systematic and prioritized financial management (Shiratuddin, 2019; Dwiyama et al., 2025). Without a well-prepared RAPBS, institutions risk inefficiency, budget shortages, and disorganized financial decision-making (Winoto, 2020).

The process involves five stages. The first stage is identifying revenue sources based on realistic data. The second stage is identifying institutional needs and programs based on priority scales (Susanto, 2023; Hasson et al., 2023). The third stage is drafting the budget in a structured manner. The fourth stage is deliberation and approval involving stakeholders including parents (Supriatiningsih et al., 2022; Watson et al., 2023). The fifth stage is dissemination to ensure transparency and accountability (Suryani, 2022; Wahanisa et al., 2023). RAPBS preparation must adhere to principles of transparency, participation, efficiency, and accountability. When consistently applied, RAPBS serves not only as an administrative document but also as a strategic tool for financial control and evaluation

PAUD Financial Management Implementation

Financial management in PAUD is the implementation stage of the RAPBS, where funds are utilized to support educational activities (Fitria, 2020; Armando et al., 2025). Effective financial management requires administrative orderliness, accuracy in fund usage, and alignment between planning and realization.

Operationally, it includes receiving and recording funds, implementing expenditures based on RAPBS, conducting financial supervision, maintaining documentation, and evaluating financial management (Suryani, 2022). Each transaction must be properly recorded and supported by valid documentation. Research by Maulana et al. (2024) found that many PAUD institutions still rely on manual bookkeeping, which is prone to errors and data loss. They recommend the use of simple accounting systems such as spreadsheets or cloud-based applications, although digital literacy remains a challenge. Proper financial management enhances public trust and supports institutional sustainability.

PAUD Financial Accountability

Financial accountability is the final stage of financial management, aimed at reporting and explaining the use of funds to stakeholders (Arifin, 2019; Akhyar, 2024; Garcer & Mestry, 2025). It reflects institutional commitment to transparency, accountability, and public trust.

This stage includes eight main aspects: preparation of periodic financial reports, completeness of transaction evidence, alignment between RAPBS and realization, financial transparency, reporting to stakeholders, evaluation of financial reports, proper documentation and archiving, and follow-up actions based on evaluation results (Suryani, 2022; Maulana, 2023).

Research by Hamidah et al. (2022) found that transparency to parents is often neglected. Many institutions prepare reports only for administrative purposes without sharing them with parents, even though parents are primary stakeholders. This lack of transparency can lead to conflicts and even student withdrawal. Therefore, accountable, transparent, and continuous financial reporting not only strengthens public trust but also supports better financial decision-making in the future (Arifin, 2019; Suryani, 2022; Maulana, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study highlights that effective PAUD financial management is not merely an administrative function but a strategic mechanism that determines institutional sustainability and the quality of early childhood education services. The key lesson derived is that a systematic cycle—encompassing planning, implementation, supervision, and accountability—must be supported by professional competence, participatory budgeting through RAPBS, and transparent reporting practices. When these elements are implemented consistently, PAUD institutions are better able to optimize diverse funding sources, strengthen stakeholder trust, and ensure service continuity. The strength of this study lies in its contribution to educational management literature by offering a comprehensive and integrative framework that connects conceptual understanding with practical financial governance mechanisms, particularly within the unique context of PAUD institutions, which have often been underexplored compared to other education levels.

However, this study is not without limitations. As a library research-based study, its findings rely heavily on existing literature and do not incorporate empirical field data, which may limit the contextual depth and applicability across diverse institutional settings. In addition, variations in regional policies and institutional capacities are not fully captured. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ mixed-method or field-based approaches to validate and refine the proposed framework in real PAUD environments. Further studies could also explore the integration of digital financial systems, such as ARKAS, and examine their effectiveness in improving transparency and accountability. Expanding the scope to comparative or longitudinal studies would provide deeper insights into sustainable financial management practices in early childhood education.

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