

Social Capital and the Sustainability of Early Childhood Education Institutions in Cingcin Village

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Abstract

In rural communities, the sustainability of early childhood education (ECE) institutions depends on the ability of schools to build and maintain strong social relationships with families and communities. This study examines the role of social capital in sustaining an early childhood education institution at TK Al Istiqomah IV, located in Cingcin Village, through the theoretical framework of James Coleman. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the school principal, teachers, and parents, complemented by observations, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings show that institutional sustainability is supported by three forms of social capital. First, obligations and expectations are developed through reciprocal relationships between the schools, families, and communities. The school fulfills community expectations by providing quality educational services, and parents and community members contribute through active social participation. Second, information channels are strengthened through the Parents-Teachers Association (PPMG), parenting programs, parent classes, and continuous communication between schools and families, enhancing coordination and community engagement. Third, social norms and effective sanctions are reflected in collaborative activities, including parent teaching programs, cooking classes, outing classes, community service, art performances, and using the local environment as a learning resource, fostering collective responsibility for sustaining the school. These findings demonstrate that social capital functions as an institutional mechanism that strengthens community participation and supports the sustainability of early childhood education institutions in rural areas.

Keywords: social capital; institutional sustainability; early childhood education; rural community

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1. Introduction

Early childhood education is a priority in the global education development agenda because it contributes to the cognitive, social, emotional development, and learning readiness of children at the next level of education (OECD, 2025). Therefore, early childhood education is an important strategy for determining the long-term quality of human resources. Along with these developments, studies on early childhood education no longer focus solely on pedagogical and psychological aspects, but place greater emphasis on social factors that influence the sustainability of early childhood education institutions. This shift indicates that educational institutions are viewed as social institutions whose continuity is shaped through interactions among actors within the community. The roles of families, communities, and social networks are viewed as integral parts in supporting the organization and sustainability of early childhood education (ECE) through various forms of partnerships and collective participation (Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018; Otero-Mayer et al., 2026; Purola & Kuusisto, 2021; Putri et al., 2019; Zuckerman, 2023). In the perspective of educational sociology, schools are arenas where various social relations, norms, values, and social networks are produced and reproduced through interactions between teachers, families, students, and the community (Ballantine et al., 2017).

The sustainability of early childhood education institutions has become an increasingly crucial issue, especially in rural communities that generally face resource limitations, whether in terms of funding, educators, or institutional capacity. Schools become part of the village social structure that relies on the support of families, community leaders, social organizations, and village governments to maintain the continuity of educational services. In Indonesia, particularly in rural contexts, the implementation of early childhood education does not only depend on funding but is also influenced by the quality of services, parental involvement, the socio-economic conditions of the community, and the

school's ability to mobilize local resources (Nakajima et al., 2021). These findings show that the sustainability of ECE is not only determined by administrative or financial factors but also by the institution's capacity to build strong social relationships with families and the community.

Various recent studies have focused on family-school-community partnership as a strategy to strengthen the implementation of early childhood education. In the concept of social capital, these collaborative relationships do not merely reflect the level of community participation, but also indicate the presence of resources embedded within the structure of social relationships (Coleman, 1988). Parental involvement develops through a sense of belonging (*connectedness*) to the school community, which is built through mutual trust, intensive communication, and sustained participation experiences (Paripurnawati et al., 2026; Purola & Kuusisto, 2021; Wijaya et al., 2022). Other research has shown that partnerships between schools, families, and communities generate various forms of social capital, namely bonding social capital among teachers, bridging social capital through family involvement, and linking social capital through school networks with the community and external institutions (Keung & Cheung, 2023). These various forms of social capital enable schools to gain access to information, social support, and resources that strengthen educational practices. Thus, educational institutions are understood as part of a social ecosystem whose sustainability is greatly influenced by the quality of relationships built with various actors around them.

Although research on school, family, and community partnerships is rapidly developing, most studies are still oriented toward improving educational outcomes, child development, or the effectiveness of parental involvement (Sari Mulyati et al., 2023; Sekosi et al., 2021). As a result, social capital is more often understood as a determinant of educational achievement rather than as an institutional mechanism that enables schools to gain social legitimacy, mobilize community support, and maintain the sustainability of educational institutions. Research on how these social relationships are reproduced into resources that support the sustainability of educational institutions is still relatively limited. This is also evident in various studies on early childhood education in Indonesia, which focus more on community participation as a form of support for the implementation of education, while the social mechanisms that enable institutions to gain legitimacy, trust, and long-term collective support have not received much attention. Even the latest systematic review shows that family involvement in early childhood education is still often peripheral and has not yet been integrated into decision-making or the strengthening of educational institutions (Rodríguez-Donoso & Camacho González, 2026). Thus, parental involvement in promoting the sustainability of educational institutions is still very minimal, especially in rural areas.

Starting from this gap, this research positions social capital as an institutional mechanism that explains how the relationships between schools, families, and communities are reproduced into social resources that support the sustainability of early childhood education institutions. Unlike previous research that used social capital to explain parental involvement or learning outcomes, this study positions the role of social capital as an institutional reproduction mechanism that enables the sustainability of early childhood education (ECE) in rural communities. This research uses James Coleman's perspective, explaining how the role of social capital, viewed through the relationships between schools, families, and communities, contributes to the sustainability of early childhood education institutions. Thus, this research not only enriches the study of social capital in education but also contributes to the development of educational sociology by demonstrating that the sustainability of early childhood education institutions is the result of the reproduction of social relationships that develop within rural communities.

2. Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design because it aims to deeply and specifically understand a social process. This approach was chosen because the researchers aimed to

understand how social capital is built, maintained, and utilized by various actors in supporting the sustainability of early childhood education institutions. Case studies are used to obtain contextual understanding of the relationships between schools, families, and communities as a social system that shapes the sustainability of educational institutions (Yin, 2018).

The research unit was Al Istiqomah IV Kindergarten located in Cingcin Village, Bandung Regency, West Java. The selection of this location was done purposively because, based on initial observations, this institution is a community-based early childhood education (ECE) that operates sustainably through the active involvement of parents, the community, and various local organizations. These conditions provide an appropriate context to examine how social capital works in supporting the sustainability of educational institutions in rural communities.

The research informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in the administration of early childhood education. The informants consist of the principal as the main informant, teachers, members of the Parent-Teacher Association (PPMG), parents of the students, and community leaders involved in various school activities. The selection of informants was carried out until the information obtained reached a saturation point (*data saturation*), which is when additional interviews no longer yield new information relevant to the research focus (Saunders et al., 2018).

Table 1

Operationalization of Concepts and Data Collection Techniques

Social Capital	Indicators	Data Sources
Obligations and Expectations	Trust established among the school, parents, and the community	Interviews, Observation
Information Channels	Parents–Teachers Association (PPMG) and parenting programs	Interviews, Documents
Norms and Obligation	Mutual cooperation (Gotong royong), parents classes, and community service (bakti sosial)	Interviews, Observation

This research was conducted in April until May 2026 and the data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore the informants' experiences regarding the forms of social relationships that develop between schools, families, and communities in supporting the sustainability of early childhood education (ECE). Observations were made of various collaborative activities, such as the Parents and Teachers Association (PPMG), parenting programs, parent classes, cooking classes, outing classes, social service activities, art performances, and community-involved learning activities. Documentation in the form of school profiles, activity reports, institutional archives, and activity photos is used as supporting data to strengthen the results of interviews and observations through the triangulation process.

3. Results

The research findings indicate that the sustainability of early childhood education institutions in Cingcin Village is supported by three interrelated factors: reciprocal relationships between the school and the community, information channels that facilitate coordination and participation, and collective norms that encourage shared responsibility. These factors show that the sustainability of TK Al-Istiqomah IV is not only influenced by educational services and institutional resources but also by the social relationships developed among the school, parents, and community. Reciprocal relationships create shared obligations and expectations, while communication through PPMG, parenting programs,

parent classes, and regular interactions strengthens coordination and participation. Meanwhile, repeated collaborative activities contribute to the development of collective norms of cooperation and responsibility. Together, these three factors form a social mechanism that supports the continued participation of families and the community in sustaining the institution.

3.1. Reciprocal Relationship between Early Childhood Education (ECE) and the Community

Research findings indicate that the sustainability of Al-Istiqomah IV Kindergarten is built through a reciprocal relationship between the school, parents, and the community. The form of the school's responsibility is manifested through consistency in carrying out educational functions, providing learning services, and opening spaces for family involvement through PPMG programs, parenting, parent classes, and various collaborative activities. On the other hand, parents fulfill a number of obligations that enable the educational services to continue, one of which is through the payment of tuition fees, albeit at a relatively affordable amount. That contribution cannot merely be understood as a transaction between users and providers of educational services, but rather as a form of material support that helps the institution's operations. Beyond financial contributions, parents also provide support in terms of effort, time, and knowledge through involvement in parent-teacher activities, assisting in learning activities, and various school events. Thus, the obligation of parents toward the institution does not stop at fulfilling educational expenses, but evolves into social involvement in school life.

The reciprocal relationship is also evident from the expectations attached to each party. Parents expect the school to provide quality educational services, pay attention to their child's development, and create a learning environment that meets their needs. Conversely, the school hopes that parents do not merely leave the education process to the institution but also support various programs organized by the school. When these expectations are met by the fulfillment of each party's obligations, a social relationship is formed that allows the school to obtain sustainable support.

These findings are consistent with previous research that shows parental involvement increases when schools successfully build inclusive relationships and provide space for families to participate in school life (Purola & Kuusisto, 2021; Sari Mulyati et al., 2023). Similarly, the partnership between schools, families, and communities expands schools' access to various social resources that support the implementation of education (Keung & Cheung, 2023). However, the results of this study not only show parental involvement in school management to support children's educational success but also as a form of support for the sustainability of early childhood education institutions. These findings also differ from some studies in Indonesia that generally interpret community participation as involvement in school activities or support for the learning process (Putri et al., 2019; Wijaya et al., 2022). In the case of Al Istiqomah IV Kindergarten, community participation is a consequence of the sustainable social relationship that has been built between the school and the community. This means that the community does not only show up when the school needs help, but views the existence of early childhood education as part of a shared interest that needs to be maintained. The role of parental involvement in school activities can provide sustainability to the institution (Alam & Hamzah, 2025).

3.2. Information Channels as Mechanisms for Coordination and Participation

Research findings indicate that Al Istiqomah IV Kindergarten develops various information channels that continuously connect the school with parents and the community. These channels are realized through the Parent-Teacher Association, parenting programs, parent classes, regular meetings between teachers and parents, as well as daily communication through WhatsApp groups. These various media are not only used to convey information about learning schedules or school activities, but also serve as a space for discussions about children's development, learning needs, and the implementation

of various collaborative programs. Thus, information does not stop as a process of message delivery, but rather evolves into a coordination mechanism that strengthens the relationship between the school and the family.

The existence of various communication channels also allows the school to respond to parents' needs more quickly while simultaneously increasing their involvement in various educational activities. For example, information about parent teaching activities, cooking classes, outing classes, and other social activities is conveyed through various communication media, allowing parents to adjust their schedules, provide input, and actively participate. In such conditions, information serves as a collective resource that facilitates the mobilization of community participation. This is in line with Coleman's argument that social networks have value because they provide access to information that supports collective action (Coleman, 1988; Field, 2008).

These findings are in line with previous research that emphasizes that communication between schools and families should not be understood merely as one-way information delivery, but must evolve into a dialog that allows for the exchange of experiences and joint decision-making (Goodall, 2016). In that context, communication technology, including digital media, will only strengthen partnerships if used to build participatory relationships, rather than merely conveying announcements. The quality of the school-family partnership is more determined by the effectiveness of the communication channels than by the frequency of communication itself (Macia Bordialba, 2018). Open, responsive, and two-way communication channels can enhance trust, reduce misunderstandings, and strengthen parental involvement in the educational process. Conversely, communication that only occurs when problems arise tends to weaken the relationship between the school and the family. The results of this study are also in line with the development of research on family-school partnerships that differentiate parental involvement from parental engagement. Parental involvement is no longer understood merely as being present at school activities, but as a collaborative process where schools and families together make decisions that support children's development (Baxter & Kilderry, 2022). The dialogic relationship allows parents to play the role of educational partners, not just recipients of information from the school.

Unlike some research that views school communication merely as an instrument for conveying information to parents, the findings of this study indicate that information channels are a form of social capital that generate coordinative capacity for educational institutions. Through PPMG, parenting programs, parent classes, and digital communication, schools not only disseminate information but also build processes of consultation, negotiation, and joint decision-making that strengthen the sustainability of early childhood education (ECE) in rural communities. Thus, according to Coleman's perspective, the main value of information channels does not lie in the number of communication media used, but rather in their ability to connect social actors within a network that enables cooperation and collective action to occur sustainably.

3.3. Collective Norms as a Mechanism for the Sustainability of ECE Institutions

Research findings indicate that various activities organized by TK Al Istiqomah IV, such as social service, distribution of basic necessities, cooking classes, outing classes, art performances, and environmental and profession introductions through local business actors, have established the norm that early childhood education is a shared responsibility between schools, families, and the community. These various activities not only expand children's learning space outside the classroom but also create opportunities for parents and the community to directly participate in school life. Thus, community participation develops not merely as support for school programs, but as a social practice that gradually becomes part of the community culture.

These findings are consistent with previous research that shows that partnerships between schools, families, and communities enable the formation of bridging and linking social capital through community involvement in various educational activities (Keung & Cheung, 2023). Collaborative

activities not only strengthen the learning process but also build a sense of ownership toward educational institutions, allowing schools to gain more sustainable social support. The results of this study are also in line with the study of social capital and early childhood education, which explains that collaboration between early childhood education institutions and families is a process of forming a new community of parents and professionals (Višnjić Jevtić, 2023). Through repeated interactions in various joint activities, the relationships between teachers, parents, and the community develop into social capital that strengthens the sustainability of the institution. In other words, participation norms do not emerge spontaneously, but are reproduced through continuous collective experiences.

In the context of Indonesia, these findings are consistent with previous research that shows that partnerships between schools, families, and communities in early childhood education institutions not only increase parental involvement but also build mechanisms for joint reflection and evaluation, allowing various educational programs to be sustained over the long term (Safitri, 2023). The research emphasizes that the success of partnerships does not depend on the number of activities organized, but rather on the school's ability to build a collaborative culture that involves the community as part of the educational ecosystem. Similarly, other research shows that the sustainability of partnerships between early childhood education units and families requires a structured mechanism, from the planning stage, implementation, to program evaluation (Rahma et al., 2024). Sustained communication and clear role division allow parents to not only be present as activity participants but also as partners contributing to the development of educational institutions.

These findings reinforce the results of this study that participation norms are built through collaborative experiences that are continuously reproduced in various school activities. However, the interview results also indicate that the participation norms at TK Al Istiqomah IV are not yet fully accompanied by effective sanctions as described by Coleman. Some residents still choose not to participate in school activities without facing significant social consequences. This condition shows that adherence to participation norms is still more based on individual awareness rather than community social control. From Coleman's perspective, the weakness of reward and social reprimand mechanisms causes norms to not fully function as social capital capable of consistently directing collective behavior.

4. Discussion

This study uses James Coleman's social capital perspective to understand the relationship between schools, families, and communities in generating social resources that support the sustainability of early childhood education institutions. Coleman (1988) defines social capital as a set of resources inherent in the structure of social relationships that facilitate the actions of individuals or groups to achieve specific goals. Unlike human capital, which resides in individuals, or physical capital, which is material in form, social capital exists in the relationships between actors that are built through social interactions. Thus, the main value of social capital does not lie in the ownership of resources, but in the ability of social networks to generate cooperation that enables shared goals to be achieved. In the field of education, Coleman demonstrated that social capital developed within families and communities contributes to the formation of human capital and the success of educational institutions. This perspective has since been widely used in educational sociology research to explain how social relationships influence various educational processes (Coleman, 1988; Dika & Singh, 2002). Coleman (1988) identified three main elements in social capital that facilitate collective action, namely, first, obligations and expectations arising from trust within the social environment; second, the smooth flow of information within the social structure to encourage the development of activities in society; and third, norms that must be adhered to with clear and effective sanctions. The results of this study were analyzed using these three elements of social capital. In general, the research results show the role of

social capital as a mechanism for sustainability in early childhood education institutions at TK Al Istiqomah IV.

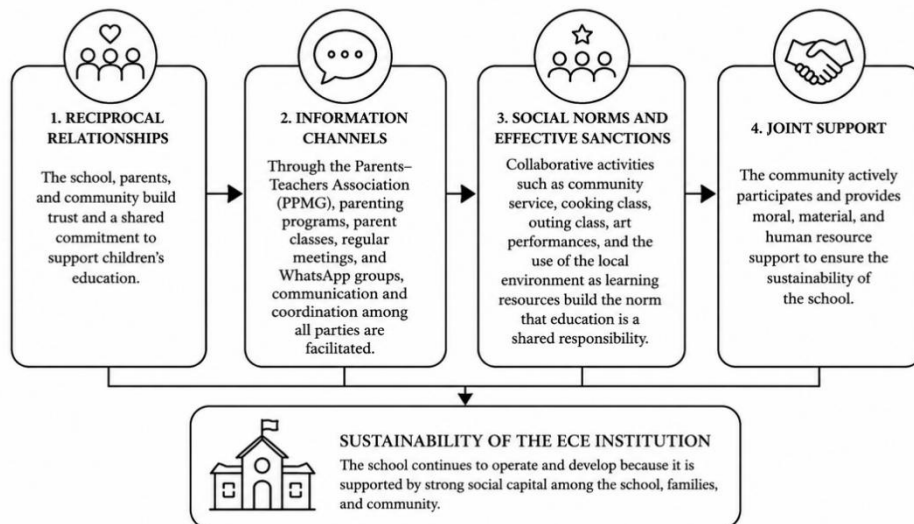


Figure 1

Mechanism of the Role of Social Capital in the Sustainability of ECE

Based on the analysis results, the role of social capital in the sustainability of TK Al Istiqomah IV can be synthesized into three main dimensions of James Coleman's social capital, namely obligations and expectations, information channels, and social norms and effective sanctions. The three dimensions do not work separately, but rather interact with each other to form collaborative relationships between the school, family, and community. These dimensions can be understood as a sequential and mutually reinforcing process. Obligations and expectations establish the foundation of reciprocal relationships among educational actors; these relationships are then strengthened through information channels that facilitate communication and coordination; subsequently, repeated interactions contribute to the formation of social norms and effective sanctions that regulate participation and shared responsibility. Through this process, social capital develops into a mechanism that supports collective action and ultimately contributes to the sustainability of the early childhood education institution in a rural community.

The first dimension, obligations and expectations, is reflected in the reciprocal relationships established between the school, parents, and community. From the perspective of educational sociology, these relationships demonstrate that the sustainability of educational institutions is the result of the reproduction of social relationships that generate shared commitment between schools and communities. In the rural context, when material resources are relatively limited, the institution's ability to build obligations and expectations becomes social capital that enables the school to obtain legitimacy, support, and community participation sustainably. Thus, the sustainability of early childhood education does not solely depend on the capacity of the community organization. Rather, it is also shaped by the ability of the school to establish reciprocal relationships in which each actor develops expectations of support and a sense of responsibility toward the continuation of the institution. These reciprocal relationships subsequently create the foundation for more intensive communication among the actors involved.

In this context, information channels become an important mechanism through which obligations and expectations can be maintained and translated into coordinated action. From Coleman's perspective (1988), information channels are a form of social capital that enables individuals to obtain the information needed to act effectively. Information is viewed as a valuable resource, but the process of obtaining it requires costs, time, and access to social networks. The existence of social relationships

that provide a continuous flow of information becomes an important mechanism that reduces information search costs while facilitating coordination among actors in achieving common goals. In the context of education, information channels not only serve to convey administrative messages but also build two-way communication that allows schools, families, and communities to align expectations, resolve issues, and strengthen cooperation in the administration of education (Coleman, 1988).

The function of information channels becomes increasingly important in early childhood education because the educational process occurs simultaneously at school and at home. Intensive communication between teachers and parents allows for the continuity of children's learning experiences in both environments (Sheridan et al., 2019). From the perspective of educational sociology, the various communication channels established by the school create interaction spaces that connect families, teachers, and community members, functioning as part of a broader social network through which information, support, and shared expectations can be exchanged (Coleman, 1988; Hohlfeld et al., 2010). These interactions not only facilitate the dissemination of information but also build coordination, strengthen a sense of belonging, and mobilize community participation in supporting the sustainability of educational institutions. In other words, information channels function as institutional mechanisms that connect various educational actors, allowing the obligations and expectations established through reciprocal relationships to be communicated, coordinated, and transformed into collective action.

As these interactions are continuously repeated, they contribute to the formation of shared norms regarding participation and responsibility. From the perspective of educational sociology, this finding demonstrates that the sustainability of early childhood education (ECE) institutions is not solely determined by organizational resources but also by the capacity of the school to sustain shared norms, obligations, and expectations through ongoing social relationships involving families and communities (Field, 2008; Mikiewicz, 2021; Wang, 2008). Various collaborative activities implemented by TK Al-Istiqomah IV have transformed the school into a social space where the values of mutual cooperation, shared responsibility, and community engagement are continuously reproduced through everyday educational interactions. In this process, social norms and effective sanctions function to reinforce the expectations that have been established through reciprocal relationships. When participation, cooperation, and shared responsibility become socially expected behaviors, actors are encouraged to maintain their involvement in the activities of the school. Thus, norms do not operate independently from obligations and information channels; rather, they emerge and become effective through continuous interaction, communication, and collective practice.

The interaction among these three dimensions is ultimately reflected in joint support from the community. The community actively participates and provides moral, material, and human resource support to ensure the sustainability of the school. Joint support, therefore, can be understood not as a separate fourth dimension of Coleman's social capital, but as a concrete manifestation of the three dimensions operating together. Reciprocal relationships create the willingness to support the school, information channels enable actors to understand where and how support is needed, while social norms and effective sanctions encourage actors to maintain their participation and shared responsibility. Through this interconnected process, social capital is converted into collective support that strengthens the institutional capacity of TK Al-Istiqomah IV.

Ultimately, the sustainability of TK Al-Istiqomah IV emerges from the continuous interaction between social relationships, communication, norms, and collective support. The school continues to operate and develop because it is supported by strong social capital among the school, families, and community. This finding reinforces the view that schools function not only as educational organizations but also as social institutions that sustain collective action by strengthening relationships between schools, families, and local communities (Bjork & Susanti, 2023; Järventausta & Paananen, 2026;

Paniagua & Collet-Sabé, 2026). Therefore, the sustainability of ECE institutions in rural communities can be understood as a socially reproduced process in which obligations and expectations are strengthened through information channels, institutionalized through social norms and effective sanctions, and ultimately manifested in joint support for the continued existence of the school.

5. Conclusion

This research shows that the sustainability of early childhood education institutions in rural communities is not only determined by the quality of educational services, school leadership, or the availability of resources, but also by the institution's ability to build and reproduce social capital with families and the community. Based on James Coleman's social capital perspective, the sustainability of Al Istiqomah IV Kindergarten is formed through reciprocal relationships between the school and the community that generate shared commitments, supported by information channels that enable ongoing coordination and communication, and reinforced by participation norms that encourage collective involvement in various educational activities. Nevertheless, the mechanism of social sanctions has not yet developed optimally, so the participation of some community members is still largely based on individual awareness rather than community social control.

Theoretically, this research expands the application of Coleman's social capital perspective in educational sociology by demonstrating that social capital not only functions as a resource that enhances community participation but also as an institutional mechanism that supports the sustainability of early childhood education institutions. These findings affirm that the sustainability of early childhood education (ECE) is the result of the reproduction of social relationships that connect schools, families, and communities within an educational ecosystem. Therefore, strengthening the sustainability of ECE requires strategies that are not only oriented toward improving the quality of learning but also toward enhancing social relations, collaborative communication, and a culture of community participation as the foundation for the continuity of educational institutions.

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