

Governance of Community Learning Centers in Indonesia: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Background - Community Learning Centers serve as critical non-formal education institutions in Indonesia, yet governance challenges persist across leadership, collaboration, accountability, policy alignment, and digital dimensions.

Research Urgency - Despite growing research on CLC, a comprehensive synthesis focusing specifically on governance dimensions remains limited. Post-pandemic digital transformation introduces new governance dynamics requiring systematic analysis.

Research Objectives - This study aims to: (1) systematically review literature on CLC governance in Indonesia; (2) identify key governance dimensions influencing implementation; (3) develop an integrated multi-level governance framework; (4) identify critical challenges; and (5) provide evidence-based recommendations.

Research Method - Following the PRISMA framework, 18 studies from Google Scholar, Scopus, and ERIC (2022–2026) were analyzed using a multi-level governance theory. Thematic analysis employed an integrated deductive-inductive approach.

Research Findings - Results reveal five key governance dimensions: transformational leadership capacity, multi-stakeholder collaboration, accountability mechanisms, policy alignment, and digital governance. Cross-study synthesis identifies three structural contradictions: the standardization-flexibility paradox, the accountability pluralism dilemma, and the digital equity tension.

Research Conclusion - Governance plays a decisive role in shaping CLC effectiveness, quality, and sustainability. The integrated multi-level framework illustrates complex interdependencies across micro, meso, and macro governance levels, advancing governance theory for community-based non-formal education in developing country contexts.

Research Novelty/Contribution - This study provides the first comprehensive multi-level governance framework specifically tailored to community-based non-formal education in developing country contexts, synthesizing fragmented literature into a coherent theoretical model and offering evidence-based policy recommendations for strengthening inclusive lifelong learning ecosystems.

Keywords: *accountability mechanisms; collaborative governance; community learning center; educational governance; non-formal education.*

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INTRODUCTION

Non-formal education represents a critical pathway for promoting lifelong learning and social inclusion, particularly for underserved and marginalized populations who lack access to formal schooling (UNESCO, 2015; Hanemann, 2025). In Indonesia, Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat (CLC) serve as the primary community-based institutions for non-formal education, mandated under Permendikbud No. 81 Tahun 2014 to deliver literacy education, equivalency programs (Package A, B, C), life skills training, and vocational learning across diverse socioeconomic contexts. As of 2024, over 8,000 CLC operate nationwide, collectively reaching an estimated 1.2 million equality education learners annually—many of whom have no viable alternative pathway to educational participation (Wiharjo & Wulandari, 2024; Rochman et al., 2024). Despite this extensive reach, CLC remain chronically under-resourced and institutionally fragile, raising fundamental questions about the governance arrangements that determine their effectiveness and sustainability.

Despite their strategic importance in Indonesia's lifelong learning ecosystem, CLC effectiveness is closely and consistently linked to the quality of governance arrangements regulating institutional management, financing, coordination, and accountability (Rochman et al., 2024; Prasetyo & Kusumawardani, 2025). Empirical studies across diverse regional contexts persistently document a recurring set of governance deficits: limitations in leadership quality and managerial competence, significant institutional capacity gaps, fragmentation in stakeholder coordination, and inconsistencies in policy implementation at the local level (Pramudia et al., 2017; Ridwan et al., 2025; Belete et al., 2022; Bahri et al., 2024). These governance deficits are not isolated institutional failures—they constitute a systemic pattern with direct consequences for program quality, learner outcomes, and the long-term sustainability of community-based non-formal education in Indonesia.

Understanding these challenges requires a governance lens that moves beyond institutional management toward a more comprehensive conceptual framework. Governance in education refers to the structures, processes, and relationships through which institutions are directed, controlled, and held accountable (Bevir, 2013; Pierre & Peters, 2020; Solfema et al., 2025). Contemporary governance theory has evolved from hierarchical state administration toward networked arrangements that emphasize collaboration, participation, and shared responsibility among diverse state and non-state actors (Ansell & Gash, 2008). The New Public Governance (NPG) framework, in particular, represents a significant paradigm shift toward plural service delivery systems characterized by inter-organizational relationships and co-production of public value (Osborne, 2010)—a conceptualization highly relevant to community-based institutions like CLC that operate at the intersection of government mandate and grassroots community agency.

Multi-level governance theory extends this analytical framework by conceptualizing governance as operating simultaneously across micro (institutional), meso (network), and macro (policy) levels, with complex and recursive interactions across scales (Hooghe & Marks, 2003). This perspective is particularly valuable for analyzing CLC governance, which inherently involves individual institutional management, local inter-organizational partnerships, and alignment with national policy frameworks. Educational governance scholarship further highlights transformational leadership, stakeholder engagement, transparency, policy alignment, and digital transformation as key determinants of institutional performance and educational quality (Torfing et al., 2012; Benavot & Williams, 2023). Together, these theoretical resources provide a robust analytical foundation for systematic examination of CLC governance.

Despite growing scholarly attention to CLC, the existing literature remains fragmented and methodologically limited in critical ways. Most studies examine individual governance dimensions in isolation—addressing leadership (Rochman et al., 2024), stakeholder collaboration (Pramudia et al., 2017), or policy implementation (Wiharjo & Wulandari, 2024) as separate concerns—without integrating findings into a coherent multi-level governance framework. No prior systematic review has synthesized this literature through an explicit governance theory lens to identify cross-cutting patterns, contradictions, and evidence gaps. Furthermore, the post-pandemic period (2022–2026) has introduced qualitatively new governance dynamics:

accelerated digital transformation, policy restructuring under the Kurikulum Merdeka reform, and reconfigured stakeholder relations that existing pre-pandemic syntheses do not capture (Baihaqy & Subriadi, 2023; Bahri et al., 2024). This combination of theoretical fragmentation and rapidly evolving empirical context creates a clear and urgent need for systematic, theoretically-grounded governance synthesis.

This study addresses this gap through a systematic literature review of CLC governance in Indonesia. Specifically, it aims to: (1) systematically review and synthesize literature on CLC governance published between 2022–2026; (2) identify the key governance dimensions influencing CLC program implementation and effectiveness; (3) develop an integrated multi-level governance framework tailored to community-based non-formal education; (4) identify structural barriers and contradictions pervading the governance landscape; and (5) provide evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice. By doing so, this review makes a threefold contribution: theoretically, by extending multi-level governance theory to community-based non-formal education settings in developing country contexts; methodologically, by providing the first PRISMA-guided governance synthesis of the post-pandemic CLC literature; and practically, by offering an actionable framework for policymakers, CLC managers, and education stakeholders seeking to strengthen Indonesia's inclusive lifelong learning ecosystem.

METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) as its primary research design, selected for its capacity to systematically identify, appraise, and synthesize empirical and conceptual evidence from a defined body of literature in a transparent and replicable manner (Booth et al., 2016; Gough et al., 2017). SLR was deemed the most appropriate methodology given the fragmented and heterogeneous nature of existing CLC governance scholarship: unlike meta-analysis, which requires quantitative effect size aggregation, or narrative review, which lacks systematic search and appraisal protocols, SLR enables rigorous qualitative synthesis of diverse study designs while minimizing selection bias (Page et al., 2021). The review followed the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework as the reporting standard, ensuring that all procedural stages are documented with sufficient detail for independent replication (Page et al., 2021). The unit of analysis comprised peer-reviewed empirical and conceptual studies addressing governance, management, leadership, accountability, or policy dimensions of CLC published between 2022 and 2026. The central research question guiding this review was: *"What are the key governance dimensions influencing Community Learning Center (CLC) program implementation and effectiveness in Indonesia?"* The following subsections describe the data sources and search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, PRISMA screening process, quality assessment, and data extraction and analysis procedures employed.

Research design

The SLR design was selected for its systematic, replicable, and transparent approach to synthesizing existing evidence on a specific research question (Booth et al., 2016). This design is particularly appropriate for mapping governance dimensions of CLC, given the fragmented yet growing body of literature. The modified PRISMA framework guided all stages of the review, ensuring methodological rigor and minimizing selection bias.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

Comprehensive searches were conducted across three databases: Google Scholar, Scopus, and ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), selected for extensive educational research coverage including international and Indonesian publications. Google Scholar provided the broadest coverage of Indonesian-language peer-reviewed sources, Scopus ensured international indexing coverage, and ERIC provided specialized educational research literature.

Search terms combined keywords using Boolean operators: Primary: "community learning center*" OR "CLC" OR "Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat"; Governance: "governance" OR "management" OR "leadership" OR "administration"; Context: "Indonesia*" OR "non-formal education"; Additional: "stakeholder*" OR "collaboration" OR "accountability" OR "policy".

The temporal boundary of 2022–2026 was deliberately selected to capture post-pandemic governance dynamics in Indonesian non-formal education—specifically the digital transformation acceleration, policy restructuring under the Kurikulum Merdeka reform, and reconfigured stakeholder relations following COVID-19 disruptions. Furthermore, CLC governance literature prior to 2022 has been previously synthesized by Rochman et al. (2024) and Pramudia et al. (2017), whose foundational frameworks this study explicitly builds upon rather than duplicates. The targeted temporal scope reflects established SLR methodology emphasizing focused, replicable searches over exhaustive cataloguing, consistent with Booth et al. (2016) and Gough et al. (2017).

The final inclusion of 18 studies reflects the realistic ceiling of indexed peer-reviewed publications on CLC governance within the 2022–2026 temporal window. Comparative benchmarking with precedent SLRs corroborates this: Belete et al. (2022) included 12 studies in their international CLC review; Rochman et al. (2024) analyzed 15 articles in their CLC management SLR; and Hadi (2025) synthesized 14 studies on campus mosques as educational spaces. As Booth et al. (2016) emphasize, in qualitative evidence synthesis, rigor of inclusion criteria and conceptual contribution of included studies matters more than sample size alone.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria encompassed studies focused on CLC or equivalent community learning centers that discussed governance, management, leadership, or policy aspects; provided empirical data or substantive conceptual analysis; were published in English or Indonesian; and underwent peer review. Exclusion criteria eliminated studies focused exclusively on formal education, lacking substantive governance discussion, opinion pieces without empirical grounding, and duplicate publications.

PRISMA Screening Process

Table 1 presents the PRISMA flow diagram results.

Table 1. PRISMA Screening Results

Phase	Process	Records (n)
Identification	Google Scholar (n=75), Scopus (n=11), ERIC (n=10) — total initial records	96
Deduplication	Duplicates removed based on title, author, publication year — 21 eliminated	75
Screening	Title & abstract screening; 43 excluded (irrelevance to education: n=18; governance not substantive: n=15; other sectors: n=10)	32
Eligibility	Full-text assessment; 14 excluded (indirect governance focus or insufficient depth)	18
Inclusion	Final set meeting all criteria included in qualitative synthesis	18

Quality Assessment

Included studies underwent quality appraisal using adapted Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) criteria: clarity of objectives, methodological appropriateness, data adequacy, finding credibility, and governance knowledge contribution. All 18 studies met acceptable thresholds.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Structured templates captured: publication details, research design, theoretical frameworks, governance dimensions, key findings, and limitations. Thematic analysis employed an integrated deductive-inductive approach. Initial coding used a deductive governance framework (leadership, collaboration, accountability, policy, digital governance). Subsequent inductive analysis identified emergent sub-themes. Cross-study comparison was systematically conducted to reveal convergent patterns, contradictions, and contextual variations.

Interpretive synthesis developed an integrated theoretical framework, analyzing findings comparatively across governance levels (micro, meso, macro) positioned within established theories to generate new conceptual insights.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study based on a systematic analysis of learners' needs, model development, implementation, and effectiveness in improving productive digital literacy in Community Learning Centers (CLC). The discussion integrates empirical data from observations, interviews, validation results, and learning outcome measurements with relevant theoretical and empirical studies on digital literacy and project-based learning. By combining descriptive and inferential analysis, this section aims to explain not only *what* was found, but also *why* the findings occurred and *how* they contribute to the broader discourse on digital literacy development in non-formal education contexts.

Systematic review of 18 studies reveals complex, multi-dimensional governance dynamics in CLC implementation. Rather than presenting findings study-by-study, this synthesis identifies cross-cutting patterns, contradictions, and tensions that together illuminate the governance architecture of Indonesian community learning centers. Three structural contradictions pervade the literature: (1) the standardization-flexibility paradox—tension between national quality standards and local community responsiveness; (2) the accountability pluralism dilemma—competing accountability demands from government, funders, learners, and communities; and (3) the digital equity tension—digital adoption that simultaneously promises efficiency and threatens to deepen existing inequalities. These contradictions operate across the five governance dimensions analyzed below.

Transformational Leadership and Institutional Capacity (Micro-Level)

A convergent pattern across studies is that leadership quality constitutes the single most consequential governance variable for CLC effectiveness—yet the evidence simultaneously reveals a systematic and geographically predictable capacity gap. Across multiple independent studies spanning different regions and methodologies, a consistent finding emerges: leadership quality is the decisive differentiator between effective and ineffective CLC (Pramudia et al., 2017; Ridwan et al., 2025; Rochman et al., 2024). Effective leaders demonstrate transformational characteristics—inspirational vision, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and adaptive capacity navigating resource constraints—that cascade across all other governance dimensions.

However, cross-study analysis reveals a critical contradiction: the very studies that identify leadership as the key determinant simultaneously document the systematic absence of professional development infrastructure to cultivate such leadership. Urban CLC with professional development access demonstrate entrepreneurial, innovative approaches—actively diversifying funding, developing market-responsive vocational programs, and leveraging digital technologies (Bahri et al., 2024)—while rural counterparts exhibit passive, administratively dependent patterns. Rochman et al. (2024) document the root causes: insufficient professional training, limited contemporary management practice exposure, weak strategic planning capabilities, and inadequate succession planning. International evidence (Velarde, 2022) corroborates that

strong leadership coupled with systematic support structures significantly enhances learner retention and success—yet such support structures are precisely what most Indonesian CLC lack.

This urban-rural leadership divide points to a deeper structural issue: the absence of a nationally mandated, regionally differentiated capacity-building system. Theoretically, findings align with institutional theory emphasizing organizational capacity and leadership as institutional resilience determinants (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Critically, the pattern across studies suggests that uniform, national capacity-building interventions would fail to address contextual constraints—rural CLC require differentiated support addressing specific regional resource, infrastructure, and succession challenges that urban-focused programs systematically overlook.

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Network Governance (Meso-Level)

At the meso level, a fundamental tension emerges between the theoretical centrality of collaboration in community-based education and the empirical fragility of actual partnership arrangements in Indonesian CLC (Ilyas et al., 2025). While studies consistently affirm stakeholder collaboration as essential for resource mobilization and program sustainability, the cross-study pattern reveals that the majority of CLC partnerships are characterized by informality, asymmetric power relations, and transactional rather than transformative engagement—a pattern that persists across regional contexts and partnership types.

Analysis of diverse stakeholder configurations—local education offices (Dinas Pendidikan), village authorities, NGOs, private employers, religious institutions, community organizations, and learner associations—reveals that studies aligned with collaborative governance theory (Ansell & Gash, 2008) consistently distinguish between genuine collaborative governance (characterized by clear roles, mutual trust, shared decision-making, and sustained communication) and nominal partnership (characterized by tokenistic community consultation without structural co-governance). Only the former enhances program quality, particularly in vocational training (Pramudia et al., 2017).

Critically, cross-study comparison reveals that community participation—theoretically central to community-based education—most commonly takes the weakest participatory form across the reviewed studies: consultation rather than co-governance. While communities may be consulted about preferences, genuine co-governance involving shared decision-making power over resources, staffing, or strategy remains rare across the evidence base. This pattern is directly contradicted by international comparative evidence: non-formal education programs that genuinely integrate intergenerational approaches and community co-design demonstrate substantially stronger social inclusion outcomes and sustainability (Kicherova et al., 2022; Ambarini et al., 2025).

Multiple studies independently converge on identifying "collaborative governance deficits" (Emerson et al., 2012)—specifically, the absence of institutional infrastructure for sustained collaboration: formal coordination mechanisms, resource-sharing agreements, conflict resolution processes, and accountability frameworks. Wiharjo & Wulandari (2024) and Rochman et al. (2024) document overlapping government agency authority, short-term project-based partnerships lacking institutionalization, and power asymmetries between CLC and government/donor partners. The structural consequence is governance fragility: informal, ad hoc partnerships create sustainability risks that are not merely incidental but systemic across the evidence base.

Accountability, Transparency, and Monitoring Systems

Across the reviewed literature, accountability emerges as the governance dimension with the largest gap between normative expectation and empirical practice—and as the dimension where the accountability pluralism dilemma is most acute. The consistent cross-study finding is that CLC accountability systems are underdeveloped and inconsistently implemented (Rochman et al., 2024; Purnomo et al., 2024), yet this underdevelopment cannot be attributed to simple neglect: rather, it reflects the structural ambiguity of CLC's organizational position.

A recurring contradiction in the literature is that CLC simultaneously face multiple, sometimes competing accountability demands without the governance infrastructure to manage this plurality.

Contemporary governance theory emphasizes "accountability to multiple stakeholders" rather than simple hierarchical reporting (Bovens, 2007): government regulators demand compliance accountability, funders require financial stewardship, learners expect quality education, communities seek responsiveness, and civil society monitors social impact. The reviewed studies collectively document how this multi-directional accountability demand overwhelms the technical and political capacity of most CLC—many of which lack data management systems, evaluation expertise, and standardized performance indicators.

Importantly, however, the literature does not present a uniformly pessimistic picture: a minority of studies identify positive accountability innovations that reveal pathways beyond the current deficit. Some CLC implement participatory evaluation involving learners and communities, create transparency through public reporting, and utilize simple digital tools for attendance tracking and outcome documentation. International comparative evidence from Morocco's adult literacy programs (Adeoye et al, 2024; Douai et al., 2025) demonstrates that comprehensive evaluation frameworks incorporating multi-domain skill development provide more robust accountability and program improvement mechanisms than narrow compliance reporting. The cross-study implication is that accountability improvement requires not simply more reporting but a fundamental reorientation from upward compliance accountability to multi-directional developmental accountability.

Policy Alignment and Regulatory Coherence (Macro-Level)

At the macro level, the reviewed literature converges on a foundational policy paradox: Indonesian CLC operate within a policy framework that formally recognizes their centrality to lifelong learning while simultaneously generating the regulatory and funding fragmentation that most constrains their governance effectiveness. Wiharjo & Wulandari (2024) document that while national policies formally establish CLC quality standards, local implementation frequently diverges from policy intentions—a pattern echoed across multiple studies.

Cross-study analysis identifies the proximate causes of policy-practice gaps as consistently interrelated rather than independent: insufficient resource allocation relative to mandates, limited local government supervision capacity, overlapping and sometimes contradictory regulations across government levels, and inadequate policy local adaptation mechanisms form a mutually reinforcing system of governance constraints (Yusuf, & Mkpa, 2025). Indonesia's decentralization (since 1999) transferred significant educational authority to districts, but the reviewed studies collectively document that this transfer was not accompanied by equivalent capacity transfer: some districts prioritize CLC actively while others treat them marginally, creating substantial inter-district variation in quality and sustainability.

The standardization-flexibility paradox manifests most acutely at this macro level. The reviewed literature consistently shows tension between policies emphasizing national quality standards and accountability on one hand, and CLC autonomy and community responsiveness on the other. Rather than these being alternative policy choices, the cross-study evidence suggests they represent competing imperatives that cannot be resolved through simple policy design—they require ongoing reflexive governance (Janowski, 2015) at multiple levels simultaneously. Fragmented funding mechanisms across multiple uncoordinated channels—government block grants (BOP PAUD-Dikmas), project-based funding, district education budgets, and philanthropic/CSR sources—represent the most concrete structural barrier.

Digital Governance and Technological Transformation

Digital governance presents the starkest within-study contradiction in the reviewed literature: the same studies that document digital transformation as a governance opportunity simultaneously reveal it as a mechanism for reinforcing existing inequalities. Recent studies (Baihaqy & Subriadi, 2023; Bahri et al., 2024) document that CLC with higher digital readiness demonstrate improved administrative efficiency, enhanced accountability through better data availability, expanded learner reach through online programs, and more effective stakeholder communication.

However, cross-study comparison reveals that digital adoption is systematically correlated with prior resource advantage—and is therefore amplifying rather than reducing existing inequalities. Rural and remote

CLC face compounding barriers: limited internet connectivity and digital infrastructure, insufficient digital devices, low digital literacy among educators and learners, lack of technical support and training, and limited technology investment resources. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital adoption, but comparative evidence across studies suggests this acceleration primarily benefited already better-resourced urban CLC, leaving rural institutions further behind (Ridwan et al., 2024; Revo et al., 2024).

The theoretical implication, supported by the convergent pattern across studies, is that digital governance should not be conceptualized as a technical adoption issue but as a fundamental equity governance challenge. Theoretically, successful digital transformation requires integrated approaches addressing technology, people, processes, and governance simultaneously (Janowski, 2015; Lau et al., 2024). Without deliberate equity-oriented digital governance policies—targeting digital infrastructure investment toward under-resourced rural CLC—the digital transformation trajectory documented in the literature will reproduce and amplify the structural inequalities it is theoretically positioned to reduce.

Integrated Multi-Level Governance Framework

Synthesizing across all five dimensions, the reviewed literature constructs a coherent—if contested—picture of CLC governance as a system characterized by recursive interdependencies and structural tensions that cannot be resolved through isolated interventions. The integrated multi-level governance framework that emerges from cross-study synthesis is not merely additive: weaknesses at one level cascade across others in predictable patterns. Limited leadership capacity at the micro level reduces partnership engagement capacity at the meso level, which in turn limits effective policy implementation at the macro level—a cascade documented across multiple independent studies.

Critically, the literature identifies three cross-cutting structural contradictions that any governance reform must navigate rather than resolve: the standardization-flexibility paradox (quality standards vs. community responsiveness), the accountability pluralism dilemma (multiple competing accountability demands exceeding governance capacity), and the digital equity tension (digital adoption amplifying rather than reducing resource disparities). These contradictions are not policy design failures but inherent features of community-based non-formal education governance in decentralized developing country contexts. The theoretical contribution of this synthesis is precisely to name these contradictions explicitly and situate them within multi-level governance theory—advancing beyond descriptive documentation toward conceptual architecture that can guide future reform.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review shows that governance is central to the effectiveness, quality, and sustainability of CLC programs in Indonesia. Five interrelated dimensions were identified: transformational leadership and institutional capacity, multi-stakeholder collaboration and network governance, accountability and transparency systems, policy alignment and regulatory coherence, and digital governance and technological transformation. The review also reveals three enduring structural contradictions shaping CLC governance: the standardization-flexibility paradox, the accountability pluralism dilemma, and the digital equity tension. Rather than being anomalies, these tensions reflect the inherent complexity of governing community-based non-formal education in decentralized developing-country contexts. The study contributes to educational governance scholarship by extending governance theory beyond formal education and proposing an integrated multi-level framework linking micro, meso, and macro governance processes. However, the final sample of 18 studies within the 2022–2026 period represents the current limits of indexed peer-reviewed evidence, so the findings reflect indexed scholarly discourse rather than the full diversity of governance practice across Indonesia. Key barriers include weak coordination, limited managerial capacity, inadequate funding, inconsistent policy support, and persistent digital inequality. Strengthening CLC governance therefore requires integrated strategies in leadership, partnerships, accountability, financing, and

context-sensitive digital development. Overall, this study offers a coherent governance framework and evidence-based directions for building more inclusive and sustainable lifelong learning ecosystems.

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