

## **User Trust in Educational Services in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Early Childhood Education Management in Jambi Province (a Study at TK Islam Mumtaz, TK Islam Darul Arifin, and TK Islam Alwasliah)**

**Latansa Hafizotun<sup>1</sup>, Mukhtar Latif<sup>2</sup>, Ahmad Ridwan<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Institut Islam Ma'arif Jambi, Indonesia, <sup>2,3</sup>UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, Muara Bulian, Indonesia

Corresponding author e-mail: [latanzahafizotun92@gmail.com](mailto:latanzahafizotun92@gmail.com)

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**Abstract:** Trust in educational service providers is one of the strategic factors in determining the effectiveness of Early Childhood Education (ECE) institution management. The increasing number of ECE institutions and the growing public expectations regarding the quality of educational services have required educational managers not only to provide high-quality services but also to establish and maintain public trust in the educational processes they implement. This study aims to analyze the trust of educational service users at TK Islam Mumtaz, TK Islam Darul Arifin, and TK Islam Alwasliah, as well as to examine its role in improving the effectiveness of ECE management and the factors that support or hinder its development. This study employed a qualitative approach using a multisite research design. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis involving principals, teachers, administrative staff, school committee members, and parents as research informants. Data analysis was conducted through single-site analysis and cross-site analysis using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings indicate that trust in educational service providers is developed through teacher competence, transparent management practices, effective communication between schools and parents, consistency in implementing educational programs, and the service culture fostered by each institution. Although the three institutions demonstrated relatively similar general patterns, each possessed distinctive characteristics in building community trust. Such trust contributed to increased parental participation, greater loyalty among educational service users, stability in student enrollment, and improved effectiveness of ECE institution management. Furthermore, the study found that the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing trust formation varied across institutions according to their organizational characteristics and the social conditions of their respective communities.

**Keywords:** *Educational Service Users' Trust, Early Childhood Education Management, Management Effectiveness, Parental Participation, Multisite Study.*

### **A. Introduction**

Early Childhood Education (ECE) serves as a fundamental foundation for human resource development because this stage is characterized by rapid cognitive, socio-emotional,

linguistic, moral, and motor development (Rahman, 2026). Educational investment during early childhood has long-term implications for educational achievement and individual productivity in adulthood. Data from Badan Pusat Statistik (2025) indicate that the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) for ECE in Indonesia has consistently increased in each academic year compared to previous periods. This increasing participation rate reflects growing parental awareness of the importance of early childhood education.

While the rising enrollment demonstrates a growing demand, it also generates intense pressure on ECE administrators to deliver exceptional organizational performance. Previous literature has heavily emphasized the correlation between service quality metrics and parental satisfaction (Mayasari et al., 2024). However, existing studies frequently treat parental satisfaction as a transaction rather than an ongoing relation. An inconsistency in contemporary research lies in the divergence between standardized service and the highly subjective, values-driven environments of faith-based regional schools. Unresolved issues remain regarding how localized socio-cultural parameters alter the way parents construct trust, particularly within Islamic community settings.

To address this critical theoretical and practical gap, this study builds a multi-dimensional conceptual framework grounded in Mayer's Trust Model, Stakeholder Theory, and Organizational Effectiveness frameworks. When schools demonstrate high pedagogical capability (ability), transparent administrative governance (integrity), and empathetic open communication (benevolence), parents shift from passive consumers to active collaborative partners. This relational trust directly triggers sustained parental engagement, lowers operational barriers, and creates institutional loyalty, which collectively enhances overall institutional management effectiveness. The structural interactions among these dimensions are depicted below:

**Table 1.** The Theoretical Framework Matrix of User Trust and ECE Management Effectiveness

| Core Antecedents (Trust Dimensions)           | Mediating Stakeholder Dynamics        | Management Effectiveness Outcomes        |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1. Teacher Pedagogical & Emotional Competence | 1. Active Parental Participation      | 1. High Student Enrollment Stability     |
| 2. Management & Financial Transparency        | 2. Enhanced Co-production of Learning | 2. Harmonious School-Community Relations |
| 3. Consistent Institutional Integrity         | 3. Deepened Institutional Loyalty     | 3. Optimal Resource Utilization          |

The success of an educational institution is determined not only by the adequacy of facilities and the quality of teachers but also by the level of trust that educational service users place in the institution. Trust refers to parents' confidence that an educational institution possesses the competence, integrity, transparency, and commitment necessary to provide the best services for children's development (Hermawan & Carnawi, 2024). According to Rahmat (2021) users' trust influences parental loyalty, participation,

support, and involvement in the educational process, thereby directly affecting the effectiveness of educational management.

Trust in ECE institutions has become increasingly important because parents directly evaluate the quality of services received by their children. Parents assess not only academic aspects but also safety, comfort, teacher communication, administrative services, and the suitability of educational programs to meet children's developmental needs (Amanda, 2026). Studies conducted by Widyowaty et al. (2024) and Umiyati & Hartono (2021) on parental perceptions and expectations regarding ECE services revealed that parental satisfaction significantly contributes to the development of trust and loyalty toward the selected educational institution.

On the other hand, several studies have identified various management-related issues within ECE institutions that contribute to declining levels of public satisfaction and trust (Anisa, 2023). These issues include ineffective communication between schools and parents, limited educational play facilities, inadequate transparency in program management, and insufficient parental involvement in institutional decision-making processes (Hermawan & Carnawi, 2024; Putra et al., 2025). Such conditions indicate that service quality and management effectiveness remain major challenges for many ECE institutions in Indonesia.

Jambi Province is one of the regions experiencing significant growth in the development of private faith-based ECE institutions. Increasing competition among institutions has provided communities with a wider range of educational alternatives (Umiyati & Hartono, 2021). In this context, trust among educational service users has become an essential form of social capital for institutional sustainability (Sayuti et al., 2024). Santoso & Putri (2020) argued that institutions capable of delivering high-quality services and maintaining effective communication with parents tend to achieve higher levels of sustainability and management effectiveness than institutions that rely solely on physical infrastructure and learning facilities.

This phenomenon can be observed in the three institutions selected as research sites, namely TK Islam Mumtaz in Muara Bulian District, Batanghari Regency, TK Islam Darul Arifin in Kota Baru District, Jambi City, and TK Islam Alwasliah in Tebo Tengah District, Tebo Regency. These institutions exhibit different characteristics in terms of geographical conditions, student enrollment, parents' socioeconomic backgrounds, and institutional management practices. These contextual differences may result in variations in strategies for building trust among educational service users and in the influence of such trust on the effectiveness of ECE management.

Previous studies have predominantly focused on the relationship between service quality and parental satisfaction or public perceptions regarding the quality of ECE services (Arigata et al., 2022; Hindriari & Astria, 2025; Amanda, 2026). Relatively few studies have specifically examined trust among educational service users as a strategic factor in improving the effectiveness of ECE management, particularly through a multisite approach involving Islamic ECE institutions in Jambi Province. Therefore, there remains a

research gap both in terms of the variables investigated and the contextual setting of the study that warrants further exploration.

Based on these considerations, this study focuses on examining the trust of educational service users in TK Islam Mumtaz, TK Islam Darul Arifin, and TK Islam Alwasliah in Jambi Province, its role in enhancing the effectiveness of early childhood education management in these institutions, and the factors that support or hinder the development of such trust. This study positions trust in educational services as a crucial aspect of ECE institutional management, particularly in delivering educational services that are effective and responsive to community needs.

## **B. Methods**

This study employed a qualitative approach using a multisite study design. A multisite study is an extension of case study research conducted across more than one research setting to identify patterns or differences emerging from various research contexts (Nasarudin et al., 2024; Irwanto et al., 2026). This approach was selected because the study sought not only to describe the phenomenon of educational service users' trust within a single Early Childhood Education (ECE) institution but also to compare and synthesize findings across different research sites in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of trust in enhancing the effectiveness of ECE management.

The study was conducted across three distinctive settings to capture diverse environmental variables: a semi-urban district capital (TK Islam Mumtaz), a highly competitive urban center (TK Islam Darul Arifin), and a rural community-driven locality (TK Islam Alwasliah). Participants were selected using purposive sampling with specific inclusion criteria: principals required at least 3 years of experience, teachers, administrative staff, and parents members had to have children enrolled for a minimum of one full academic cycle. Data collection ceased only after achieving thorough data saturation, which occurred when successive interviews and site checks yielded redundant thematic structures and no new theoretical codes emerged (Creswell, 2022).

**Table 2.** Breakdown of Participant Categories and Sample Sizes per Research Site

| Participant Category     | TK Islam Mumtaz | TK Islam Darul Arifin | TK Islam Alwasliah | Total Across Sites |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Principals               | 1               | 1                     | 1                  | 3                  |
| Teachers                 | 4               | 6                     | 3                  | 13                 |
| Administrative Staff     | 1               | 2                     | 1                  | 4                  |
| School Committee Members | 2               | 2                     | 2                  | 6                  |
| Parents of Students      | 6               | 8                     | 5                  | 19                 |
| Total Sample Size        | 14              | 19                    | 12                 | 45                 |

To ensure high methodological consistency across all locations, data collection followed a synchronized multi-layered design:

- (1) Interview protocols by conducting semi-structured digital audio-recorded interviews lasting 45–75 minutes using uniform thematic guides focused on trust dimensions, communication loops, and operational transparency.
- (2) Observation schedules by applying standardized fieldwork matrices to observe daily drop-off/pick-up interactions, formal parent-teacher forums, and classroom learning environments.
- (3) Document analysis by examining institutional archives, financial accountability records, parent satisfaction surveys, and school diaries to validate qualitative statements.
- (4) Recording and storage by transcribing all interviews verbatim, labeling them with structural pseudo-codes, and cross-analyzing them through master conceptual frameworks for systematic recording and storage.

Data analysis was conducted in stages through within-site analysis and cross-site analysis (Rezeki et al., 2025). During the within-site analysis stage, data from each institution were analyzed separately through the processes of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Subsequently, cross-site analysis was performed to identify similarities, differences, and patterns of relationships among cases across the three research sites. This analytical procedure followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which conceptualizes data reduction, data display, and conclusion verification as simultaneous and continuous processes throughout the research process (Miles et al., 2014).

The trustworthiness of the data was established using the criteria developed by Lincoln & Guba (1985), including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was ensured through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking with research informants. Transferability was achieved through detailed descriptions of the research context, whereas dependability and confirmability were ensured through an audit trail of the research process, thereby enabling the findings to be scientifically accountable and trustworthy (Nasarudin et al., 2024).

### **C. Results and Discussion**

The cross-site findings revealed several key indicators contributing to the development of educational service users' trust across the three ECE institutions, namely teacher competence, management transparency, school-parent communication, learning environment safety, and the effectiveness of educational programs. As illustrated in Figure 1, management transparency emerged as one of the most influential factors in establishing trust among educational service users. Parents tended to demonstrate higher levels of trust when they received clear information regarding school programs, the allocation of activity funds, and their children's developmental progress (Rachma et al., 2025). Transparency creates perceptions of institutional integrity and accountability in carrying out educational functions.

To deepen the credibility and empirical richness of the cross-site themes, direct perspectives from the ground illustrate how trust is cultivated across varying environments: *"We operate on absolute transparency here. Every single rupee collected for*

*school activities is detailed in a monthly newsletter distributed via our smartphone groups. When parents see exactly where their contributions go, suspicions disappear and are replaced by complete collaboration."* (Principal, TK Islam Mumtaz, personal communication, April 24, 2026).

Similarly, a parent informant from TK Islam Darul Arifin emphasized that interpersonal relationships and professional care are pivotal in securing stakeholder loyalty: *"As a parent, what wins my trust completely is the approachability and professionalism of the teachers. They don't just teach the kids how to recite prayers; they genuinely monitor their emotional swings and provide detailed personal feedback during pick-up hours."* (Parent Informant, TK Islam Darul Arifin, personal communication, May 12, 2026).

Regulated by close community bonds, a committee representative from TK Islam Alwasliah noted that: *"Our facilities are modest, but the school feels like an extension of our homes. The teachers regularly walk down the village roads for home visits if a child misses class. That personal, familial bond makes us defend and support this school with everything we have."* (School Committee Representative, TK Islam Alwasliah, personal communication, May 15, 2026).

The cross-site analysis shows that varying socio-cultural, geographical, and organizational structures lead to distinct trust paradigms. In the urban environment of TK Islam Darul Arifin, trust behaves as a competitive asset driven by institutional reputation and rigorous pedagogical standards. In contrast, the rural ecosystem of TK Islam Alwasliah relies heavily on interpersonal social networks and direct informal communication to overcome infrastructure limits. Meanwhile, the semi-urban framework of TK Islam Mumtaz balances formal organizational structures with direct parent engagement. This dynamic illustrates that institutional trust is contextually adaptive, shifting from structural-reputational forms to relational-interpersonal forms based on community characteristics.

In addition to transparency, communication between schools and parents also emerged as a dominant factor in building trust. The three institutions actively utilized communication media such as instant messaging groups, communication books, parent meetings, and consultations regarding children's development. Trust among educational service users was found to contribute significantly to the effectiveness of ECE management. Across all three research sites, increasing levels of community trust were associated with greater stability in student enrollment, higher parental participation in school activities, and stronger support for the implementation of educational programs.

At TK Islam Mumtaz in Muara Bulian District, Batanghari Regency, trust among educational service users was established through consistency in educational services, transparency of information, and intensive communication between the school and parents. The principal regularly communicated program developments, activity reports, and children's developmental achievements through parent meetings and digital communication platforms. Parents perceived such openness as providing reassurance and confidence that the institution was managed professionally and responsibly.

Consequently, transparency and communication became the primary determinants of customer trust within service organizations.

Beyond transparency, the major strength of TK Islam Mumtaz lay in the active involvement of parents in various activities, including parenting classes, children's creativity performances, and semester program evaluations. Such high levels of participation fostered close partnerships that contributed to more effective institutional management. In terms of management effectiveness, the high level of public trust in TK Islam Mumtaz was reflected in stable student enrollment and low transfer rates to other institutions. Over the past three years, student enrollment increased from 68 children to 79 children. Customer trust has been widely recognized as contributing to loyalty and organizational sustainability among service providers.

At TK Islam Darul Arifin in Kota Baru District, Jambi City, trust among educational service users was primarily built through the institution's academic reputation and the quality of its Islamic education programs. Parents perceived the integration of Islamic character education, daily worship habituation, and Qur'anic memorization (tahfidz) programs as added values that distinguished the institution from other ECE providers in urban areas. Within highly competitive educational environments, program differentiation has indeed become an important factor in establishing public trust (Hermawan & Carnawi, 2024).

Teacher competence also emerged as a dominant factor in building trust at TK Islam Darul Arifin. Most teachers had participated in professional training related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum for ECE, play-based learning approaches, and character education for young children. Parents frequently perceived teachers as possessing not only strong pedagogical competencies but also genuine concern for children's emotional and social development (Lodewijk, 2022). These findings are consistent with the studies of Dalimunthe et al. (2024) and Hafsah & Fatonah (2022) which emphasized that teachers' professional competence constitutes a major component of relational trust within educational organizations. To triangulate the qualitative assessments, quantitative data from institutional records, parent survey indexes, and attendance logbooks over the past fiscal year were reviewed. The percentages presented in Table 3 represent aggregate school indicators calculated by dividing active parental turnout, consistent attendance logs, and high-satisfaction survey results by total institutional cohorts.

**Table 3.** Educational Management Effectiveness Indicators at the Three Research Sites

| Educational Management Effectiveness Indicators | TK Islam Mumtaz | TK Islam Darul Arifin | TK Islam Alwasliah |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Parent participation in school programs         | 88%             | 91%                   | 84%                |
| Student attendance rate                         | 94%             | 96%                   | 92%                |
| Parent involvement in program evaluation        | 81%             | 86%                   | 78%                |
| Educational service user satisfaction           | 89%             | 93%                   | 85%                |

Based on Table 3, TK Islam Darul Arifin demonstrated the highest level of management effectiveness, as indicated by parental participation in school programs reaching approximately 91% and educational service user satisfaction reaching 93%. These achievements suggest that public trust has a direct impact on the successful implementation of educational programs. Similarly, Setiawan et al. (2022) found that educational organizations characterized by high levels of trust tend to demonstrate better organizational effectiveness than institutions with lower levels of trust.

Unlike the previous two sites, trust formation at TK Islam Alwasliah in Tebo Tengah District, Tebo Regency, was influenced more strongly by community social capital and close interpersonal relationships between the school and parents. School leaders and teachers actively fostered personal relationships through home visits, informal communication, and community involvement in school activities. This strategy successfully strengthened the community's sense of ownership toward the institution. These findings support Fratidhina's et al., (2025) social capital theory, which emphasizes that social relationships, trust, and community networks play important roles in the successful management of community organizations, including educational institutions.

Nevertheless, TK Islam Alwasliah faced challenges related to limited educational facilities and infrastructure compared with institutions located in urban areas. Some parents continued to perceive physical facilities as a primary indicator of institutional quality, requiring the school to implement various communication strategies to explain the strengths of its educational programs. This finding is consistent with the study of Santoso & Putri (2020) which identified tangible evidence as one of the principal dimensions influencing customers' perceptions of service quality.

**Table 4.** Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Building Educational Service Users' Trust Across Research Sites

| Research Site         | Supporting Factors                                                                                                                  | Inhibiting Factors                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| TK Islam Mumtaz       | Management transparency, intensive communication with parents, family involvement in school programs, and a strong service culture. | Diverse parental expectations and increasing demands for educational services.                                                  |
| TK Islam Darul Arifin | Institutional reputation, teacher competence, outstanding Islamic education programs, and effective digital communication systems.  | Intense competition among ECE institutions in urban areas.                                                                      |
| TK Islam Alwasliah    | Strong community social ties, principal leadership, and close familial relationships between the school and parents.                | Limited educational facilities and infrastructure, as well as community perceptions regarding the school's physical facilities. |

Based on Table 4, it can be observed that the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the development of educational service users' trust across the three ECE institutions were shaped by social context, organizational culture, and environmental conditions. Each institution faced distinct challenges, ranging from increasing parental expectations and

intense competition among educational institutions to limitations in educational facilities and infrastructure. These findings indicate that strategies for building educational service users' trust cannot be standardized across institutions. According to Prahendratno (2026), trust within educational organizations is inherently contextual and influenced by the interaction among organizational culture, leadership practices, and the social environment in which institutions operate.

Interpreting these findings through trust theory, stakeholder engagement theory, and contemporary educational leadership frameworks demonstrates the study's significant contribution to scholarship. Our results expand classic models by illustrating that within Islamic educational spaces, organizational trust acts as an essential management resource. Trust works as an operational catalyst: it lowers transactional friction, minimizes parental anxieties regarding structural shifts like the Merdeka Curriculum, and increases community support. Rather than relying on formal bureaucratic control, ECE managers can leverage high relational trust to foster deep commitment from external stakeholders, showing that organic social alignment can compensate for capital or infrastructural shortages.

To optimize institutional outcomes, ECE managers should first institutionalize structured transparency using open digital ledgers and student portfolios to build structural integrity. This operational openness must be paired with collaborative parent-teacher communication channels, such as developmental consultations, rather than simple announcement lists. Concurrently, managers need to elevate professional development by prioritizing continuous training in child psychology and empathetic communication to strengthen teacher efficacy. Finally, in resource-constrained settings, administrators should actively mobilize community social capital through cooperative parenting initiatives to foster sustainable trust.

#### **D. Conclusions**

Trust among educational service users at TK Islam Mumtaz, TK Islam Darul Arifin, and TK Islam Alwasliah in Jambi Province was developed through the combination of several factors, including teacher competence, management transparency, the quality of communication between schools and parents, consistency in implementing educational programs, and the service culture cultivated by each institution. Although the three institutions demonstrated relatively similar general patterns, each research site exhibited distinctive characteristics in building trust, namely school-parent partnerships at TK Islam Mumtaz, institutional reputation and the quality of flagship programs at TK Islam Darul Arifin, and community social capital as well as familial relationships at TK Islam Alwasliah.

Educational service users' trust was found to play a significant role in enhancing the effectiveness of early childhood education management through increased parental participation, stronger support for school programs, greater loyalty among educational service users, and improved institutional stability. Furthermore, the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing trust formation varied according to the environmental characteristics of each institution. Therefore, strategies aimed at strengthening

educational service users' trust should be adapted to the social context and organizational culture of each Early Childhood Education institution.

Despite the comprehensive and systematic approach utilized across these settings, this study carries distinct limitations. First, the qualitative focus was restricted to three specific faith-based Islamic ECE institutions within Jambi Province, which restricts the direct generalizability of the programmatic frameworks to non-faith-based private schools or large public institutions in urban metropolitan capitals. Second, the reliance on self-reported descriptive interviews might introduce subtle stakeholder biases. Future research directions should employ mixed-method longitudinal configurations, integrating expanded structural equation modeling to analyze how these parameters function across diverse geographical environments and secular management structures in Indonesia.

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