

Managerial Competencies of ECE Administrators in Enhancing Teacher Creativity in Jambi Province a Multisite Study at TK Negeri Pembina 1 Kota Jambi, TK Negeri Pembina Rimbo Ulu, and TK Negeri Pembina Muara Bulian

Nurul Annisa Dewantari Nasution¹, Mukhtar Latif², Ahmad Ridwan³

¹Institut Islam Ma'arif Jambi, Indonesia,^{2,3}UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, Muara Bulian, Indonesia

Correspondent email: nurulade.nasution@gmail.com

Article History: Received on July 14, 2026, Revised on July 19, 2026,
Published on July 19, 2026

Abstract: The quality of Early Childhood Education (ECE) provision is determined not only by the competencies of educators but also by the managerial capabilities of school administrators. Although various policies have encouraged quality improvement, the implementation of management functions across educational institutions still demonstrates considerable variation, which affects teacher creativity and the quality of educational services. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the managerial competencies of ECE administrators in enhancing institutional creativity at TK Negeri Pembina 1 Kota Jambi, TK Negeri Pembina Rimbo Ulu, and TK Negeri Pembina Muara Bulian. This study employed a qualitative approach using a multisite case study design. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Data trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking, while data analysis was conducted using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings revealed that administrators at the three sites had implemented integrated management functions consisting of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. The implementation of these functions contributed to the enhancement of teacher creativity, as evidenced by the increased development of innovative learning media, the optimization of local and recycled materials, the implementation of project-based learning, the utilization of simple technologies, and stronger collaboration with parents. Cross-site analysis further indicated that participatory leadership, continuous academic supervision, and a collaborative work culture were the main factors strengthening institutional creativity. This study concludes that the managerial competence of ECE administrators is a strategic factor in improving both institutional creativity and the quality of early childhood education services. Therefore, strengthening managerial competencies through leadership training, academic supervision, and innovation development should become a priority in efforts to sustainably improve the quality of ECE provision.

Keywords: *Managerial Competence, Early Childhood Education Administrators, Institutional Creativity*

A. Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) serves as the fundamental foundation for developing the quality of human resources because children aged 0–6 years experience rapid development in cognitive, language, socio-emotional, moral, and motor domains (Rahman, 2026). The success of ECE implementation is determined not only by the competencies of educators but also by the quality of institutional management carried out by principals or ECE administrators (Fahmi et al., 2026). Effective management can create a conducive learning environment and foster the emergence of various learning innovations that align with children's developmental characteristics.

Managerial competence encompasses the ability to perform planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling functions (Ishak et al., 2025; Rambe et al., 2023; Wahyuni et al., 2021). ECE administrators are expected not only to carry out administrative functions but also to act as visionary, innovative, and adaptive leaders. Such competencies have become increasingly important with the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy, which emphasizes child-centered learning and enjoyable learning environments (Lembong et al., 2023).

Despite policy updates, a significant gap persists between institutional expectations and field practices regarding creativity management. Contemporary literature highlights that while instructional leadership shapes teacher self-efficacy, many administrators fail to convert administrative duties into direct support for pedagogical innovation, as top-down management frequently stifles autonomous teaching (Bush, 2024; Hallinger & Murphy, 2023). Domestically, Indonesian research underscores that program planning remains rigid, professional development is incidental, and evaluations rarely lead to reflective follow-ups (Wahyuni et al., 2021).

To resolve these inconsistencies, this study investigates the structural relationship between administrator behavior and teacher creativity. Here, teacher creativity is defined via five operational indicators: (1) autonomous media development, (2) optimization of local/recycled materials, (3) implementation of project-based learning, (4) integration of simple digital technologies, and (5) collaborative engagement with parents. Conceptually, this relationship bridges Henri Fayol's classical management functions with Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity. While Amabile posits that individual creativity relies on domain skills, creative processes, and intrinsic motivation shaped by the work environment, Fayol's functions (planning, organizing, actuating, controlling) serve as the structural tools through which ECE administrators deliberately construct this environment—supplying resources and fostering the psychological safety required for teachers to innovate (Figure 1).

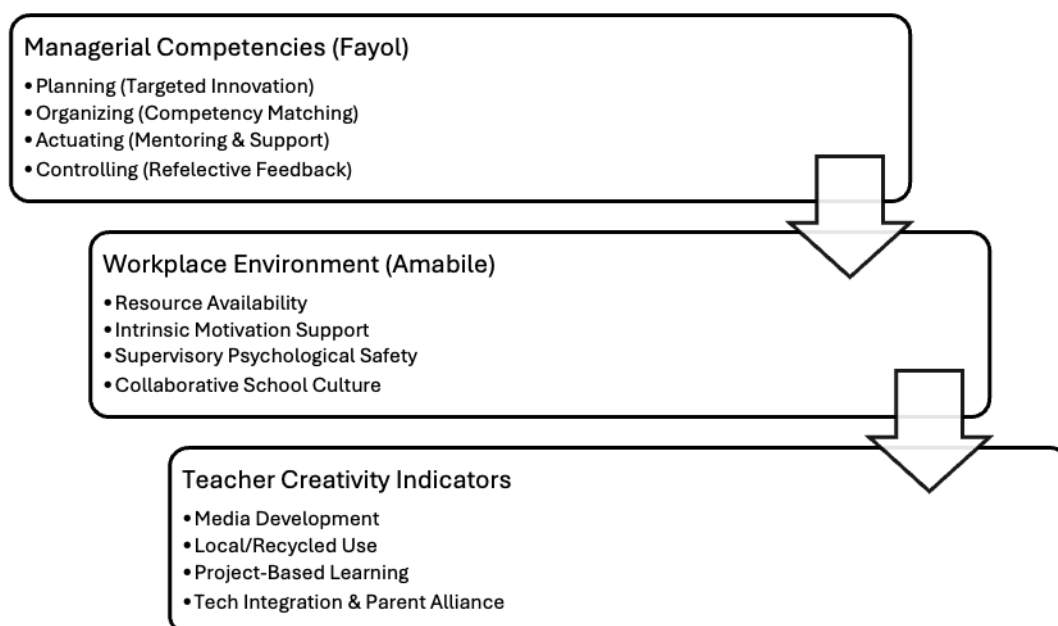


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Linking Managerial Competencies to Teacher Creativity
 (Adapted from Amabile, 1996; Fayol, 1949)

Preliminary investigations at the three target research sites—TK Negeri Pembina 1 Kota Jambi, TK Negeri Pembina Rimbo Ulu, and TK Negeri Pembina Muara Bulian—revealed clear variations in how these management functions are applied. Initial institutional documentation and baseline observation summaries revealed that out of 36 total teachers across the sites, 21 teachers (58.3%) had not participated in any professional development regarding creative pedagogical practices within the previous year, and only 14 teachers (38.9%) regularly developed their own innovative learning media.

The novelty of this study lies in its multisite qualitative design, which directly addresses gaps in single-site early childhood studies by comparing urban, semi-urban, and rural public kindergarten settings within Jambi Province. By examining these three distinct socio-geographical environments, this study uncovers how varying organizational cultures, resource limits, and local conditions alter the deployment of managerial competencies to stimulate teacher creativity. Ultimately, this research provides a comprehensive empirical framework for ECE leadership that balances standardized administrative controls with localized pedagogical innovation.

B. Methods

This study utilized a qualitative approach with a multisite case study design to examine real-world management practices across multiple settings, enabling the discovery of shared cross-site themes and unique contextual variations (Nasarudin et al., 2024). The research was conducted at three public kindergarten institutions in Jambi Province: TK Negeri Pembina 1 Kota Jambi (representing an urban context with advanced infrastructure), TK Negeri Pembina Rimbo Ulu (representing a semi-urban, ecologically integrated setting), and TK Negeri Pembina Muara Bulian (representing a developing region relying heavily on community partnerships).

Informants were selected via purposive sampling to capture rich, information-dense perspectives. The primary informants included 3 school principals (1 from each site) and 12 classroom teachers selected to represent variations in teaching experience and academic roles. To enhance data credibility and provide administrative triangulation, 3 regional educational supervisors were included as supporting informants, resulting in a total of 18 active research participants.

Data collection was carried out through three primary methods: semi-structured in-depth interviews, direct classroom and administrative observations, and institutional documentation reviews (including School Activity and Budget Plans [RKAS], teacher lesson logs, and supervision reports). To establish data trustworthiness, the researchers implemented source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member-checking procedures (Irwanto et al., 2026). Source triangulation compared data between principals, teachers, and supervisors, while technique triangulation cross-referenced verbal interview claims against direct observation notes and official school records. Member-checking was executed by returning transcribed data and thematic summaries to the informants to confirm that the interpretations accurately matched their professional experiences.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), which runs concurrently with data collection through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. As illustrated in Figure 2, the analysis was operationalized via a systematic two-tiered process: within-case analysis to build independent thematic profiles for each individual kindergarten, followed by cross-case analysis using constant comparative matrices to extract overarching structural patterns, differences, and contextual contingencies across all three research sites (Irwanto et al., 2026; Nasarudin et al., 2024).

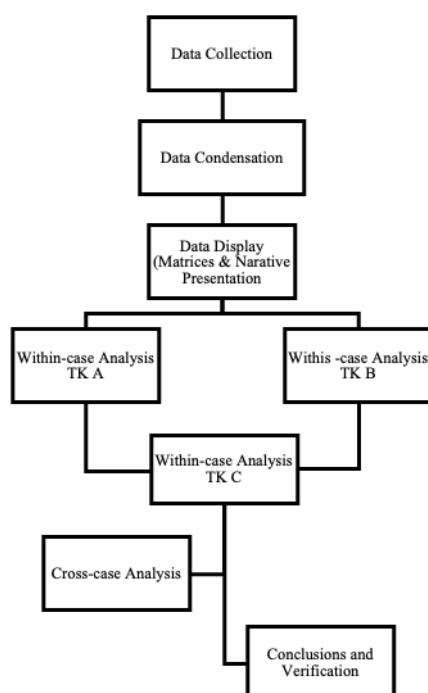


Figure 2. Stages of Data Analysis in a Multisite Study (Adapted from Nasarudin et al, 2024)

C. Results and Discussion

The findings from TK Negeri Pembina 1 Kota Jambi, TK Negeri Pembina Rimbo Ulu, and TK Negeri Pembina Muara Bulian indicate that the managerial competencies of school administrators play a crucial role in enhancing institutional creativity in Early Childhood Education (ECE) settings. Data triangulation across interviews, observations, and institutional files confirmed that all three principals actively applied the fundamental management functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. However, the localized execution strategies differed based on institutional environments, leading to unique variations in teacher outputs.

Table 1. Implementation of Management Functions by ECE Administrators Across Three Research Sites

Management Function	TK Negeri Pembina 1 Kota Jambi	TK Negeri Pembina Rimbo Ulu	TK Negeri Pembina Muara Bulian
Planning	Joint drafting of RKAS; setting digital and technological teacher creativity metrics in annual meetings.	Collaborative work programs mapping local environmental and ecological resources for classroom use.	Program drafting based on prior year evaluations and immediate baseline learner needs.
Organizing	Structural division of tasks matching IT and arts competencies; forming dedicated media teams.	Skill-based distribution focusing on environmental layout and outdoor activity supervision	Deliberative assignment matching teacher seniority, experience, and community outreach skills.
Actuating	Routine ICT mentoring sessions; technical support for media creation; monthly reflection panels.	Motivating teachers to design nature-based learning and simple project-based initiatives.	Peer-coaching and hands-on assistance using local raw resources and recycled waste materials.
Controlling	Bi-semester academic supervision via digital tools; systematic reflective debriefings.	Regular classroom walk-throughs; performance reviews tied to nature-integration metrics	Monthly teacher evaluation meetings; monitoring instructional administration and planning documents.

Table 1 demonstrates that planning was the most consistently implemented management component across the three institutions. Sixteen out of eighteen informants stated that the preparation of annual programs, semester programs, and educational calendars had been carried out collaboratively through meetings involving teachers, ensuring that each activity had clearly defined objectives. At TK Negeri Pembina 1 Kota Jambi, planning was further complemented by the formulation of teacher creativity indicators. TK Negeri Pembina Rimbo Ulu emphasized the utilization of the surrounding environment as a learning resource, whereas TK Negeri Pembina Muara Bulian prioritized work programs based on evaluations conducted during the previous academic year.

Regarding the organizing function, the findings revealed that administrators had established task distributions based on teachers' competencies and expertise. Teachers with strengths in the arts were assigned responsibility for developing children's creativity programs, while teachers with technological competencies were entrusted with designing simple digital learning media. Interview results showed that 83.3% of informants perceived this distribution of responsibilities as making work processes more effective because each teacher was assigned duties aligned with his or her professional expertise.

During the implementation stage, administrators played active roles as facilitators and motivators for teachers. The three kindergartens regularly conducted monthly evaluation meetings, mentoring sessions for instructional planning, and reflective discussions following classroom learning activities. The findings further demonstrated a substantial increase in the variety of instructional media used by teachers. Prior to the mentoring program, teachers utilized only two to three types of instructional media for each thematic unit on average. Following the intervention, the number increased to five to seven types of media, including busy books, flannel boards, loose parts materials, numeracy games utilizing recycled objects, and simple instructional videos.

To clarify the baseline quantitative metrics noted during the preliminary stage, the percentages showing changes in teacher performance were derived by analyzing institutional attendance records, media inventory tallies, and lesson plan compliance logs from the school archives, cross-checked against interview summaries. These figures are not intended to represent a mixed-methods design, but rather serve as descriptive qualitative metrics to document the baseline shifts observed after systematic principal interventions.

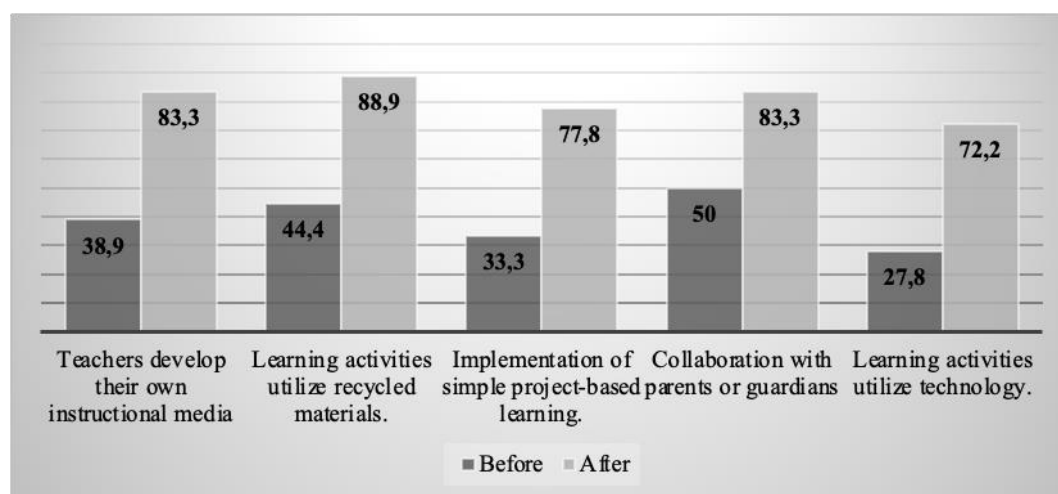


Figure 3. Development of Teacher Creativity Indicators in TK Negeri Pembina 1 Kota Jambi, TK Negeri Pembina Rimbo Ulu, and TK Negeri Pembina Muara Bulian Before and After Mentoring Programs

As shown in Figure 3, clear improvements occurred across all five teacher creativity indicators following targeted principal interventions. The proportion of teachers consistently creating individual learning media rose from 38.9% to 83.3%. Similarly, utilizing recycled materials grew from 44.4% to 88.9%, project-based instructional designs expanded from 33.3% to 77.8%, parent-teacher collaborative initiatives improved from 50.0% to 83.3%, and the purposeful integration of technology grew from 27.8% to 72.2%.

These findings reinforce the results reported by Aslam et al. (2022) and Sajdah et al. (2024) who argued that instructional leadership exercised by school principals significantly influences the quality of learning processes. Administrators who actively conduct supervision, provide feedback, and facilitate teacher professional development have been shown to improve the quality of teaching and learning activities (Hakim et al., 2024; Widodo et al., 2025). Teacher creativity does not emerge spontaneously but rather develops as the result of continuous mentoring processes implemented through reflective meetings, academic supervision, professional discussions, and opportunities for teachers to develop and implement new ideas.

To ensure qualitative trustworthiness and authenticity, direct quotations illustrate how these management functions influenced teacher practices. Regarding the planning and organizing functions at TK Negeri Pembina 1 Kota Jambi, a senior teacher (Informant J-04) stated: *"Our principal does not just tell us to be creative; she sets aside specific funds in the RKAS for digital tools and forms small working teams. Because my colleague excels at technology and I excel at arts, we were paired up to design interactive digital media. This structural support makes us feel secure and motivated to try new applications."*

Regarding the actuating and coaching functions via local resources at TK Negeri Pembina Rimbo Ulu, a classroom educator (Informant RU-02) noted: *"We face resource limitations compared to city schools, but our principal turned this into an advantage. During our weekly meetings, she encourages us to view the surrounding farmlands and waste plastics as*

learning tools. She joined us in collecting loose parts, which inspired me to build a nature-based numeracy game."

Concerning the controlling and supervisory function at TK Negeri Pembina Muara Bulian, a teacher (Informant MB-03) shared: *"Supervision used to feel like an examination where we feared making mistakes. Now, the principal uses a reflective approach. After watching my class, we sit down to discuss what worked and what didn't. This constructive feedback makes me more willing to experiment with innovative project layouts."*

Based on within-case analysis, TK Negeri Pembina 1 Kota Jambi demonstrated strengths in technology-based instructional innovation. Teachers had begun utilizing instructional videos, projectors, and simple applications to support children's learning activities. In contrast, TK Negeri Pembina Rimbo Ulu excelled in developing learning media based on natural environmental resources, whereas TK Negeri Pembina Muara Bulian focused more extensively on fostering creativity through traditional games, the use of recycled materials, and community involvement around the school environment. These differences indicate that institutional creativity is influenced by the characteristics of each local environment without reducing the quality of educational services provided.

Cross-case analysis identified relatively similar management patterns across the three institutions. All principals implemented participatory leadership approaches by involving teachers in decision-making processes. In addition, open communication and problem-solving through deliberation became organizational cultures that developed across all research sites. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Issalillah et al. (2024), which found that open and collaborative management practices create conducive working environments that provide teachers with greater flexibility to develop creative ideas.

The cross-site analysis revealed that while the overarching goal across all three sites was the advancement of teacher creativity, local contextual factors deeply altered the practical execution of management functions:

- (1) The principal of TK Negeri Pembina 1 Kota Jambi utilized a highly structured, transformative leadership style, leveraging digital infrastructure to drive modern technical literacy. Conversely, the principal at Rimbo Ulu practiced an entrepreneurial, ecological leadership style, shaping an institutional culture centered on sustainability and environmental stewardship. The Muara Bulian principal leaned heavily on a collaborative, community-centric style, cultivating an open culture that integrated village resources and parents directly into the school's daily activities.
- (2) Geographical location directly dictated resource availability. The urban setting of Kota Jambi provided stable internet access and modern digital hardware, making tech integration a viable creativity metric. The rural isolation of Rimbo Ulu forced the school to innovate within an ecological framework, utilizing raw materials from the local environment. Muara Bulian, located in a developing region, compensated for infrastructure gaps by leveraging community social capital, converting parent-teacher associations into co-creators of educational tools.

- (3) While all sites operated under the broad mandate of the national Merdeka Belajar curriculum, the local policy implementation was adapted to match regional capacities. Institutional policies in the urban site formalized digital competence in annual performance evaluations, whereas the semi-urban and developing sites adapted their internal guidelines to reward resourcefulness, community engagement, and adaptive curriculum modification.

These findings contribute directly to contemporary international debates regarding educational leadership, instructional direction, and creativity management in ECE institutions. The observed management dynamics validate and expand upon Hallinger's (2023) global instructional leadership framework, which argues that school leaders drive teacher performance not through direct administrative commands, but by building a supportive climate for professional growth. By shifting the role of academic supervision from a punitive inspection to a collaborative dialogue, these ECE administrators removed the psychological risks that often stall teacher innovation.

Furthermore, the results match Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity by proving that structural management interventions directly alter the immediate work environment, which in turn fuels individual creative action. When principals align tasks with individual teacher strengths (organizing) and provide targeted material and emotional support (actuating), they stimulate intrinsic motivation. This dynamic agrees with recent studies by Bush (2024), which show that modern educational leadership must be distributed and collaborative rather than top-down to survive in fast-changing policy environments. Rather than allowing administrative compliance to stifle teaching practices, this study demonstrates that deliberate managerial competence provides a structured framework within which teacher creativity can safely grow.

D. Conclusions

Based on the qualitative findings of this multisite study across TK Negeri Pembina 1 Kota Jambi, TK Negeri Pembina Rimbo Ulu, and TK Negeri Pembina Muara Bulian, the managerial competencies of ECE administrators serve as a primary engine for driving teacher creativity. When administrators systematically integrate the functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling, they build the organizational framework and supportive workplace climate needed for teachers to safely innovate. Rather than acting as a bureaucratic constraint, effective school management provides the resources, structural pairings, and reflective feedback that transform individual teaching methods.

The practical contribution of this study lies in its multi-contextual evidence: it proves that teacher innovation can be systematically cultivated across varied urban, semi-urban, and rural environments, provided that administrators adapt their leadership focus to leverage local organizational strengths. This study concludes that developing teacher creativity requires moving past ad-hoc training toward structured leadership preparation. ECE governance models should prioritize training administrators in collaborative supervision, localized resource planning, and distributed task management to ensure long-term, sustainable quality improvements in early childhood education.

E. Acknowledgement

Nurul Annisa Dewantari Nasution would like to express her sincere gratitude to Prof. Mukhtar Latif, M.Pd., as her academic supervisor, for his invaluable guidance, support, and direction throughout the completion of this research. Appreciation is also extended to the principals and teachers of TK Negeri Pembina 1 Kota Jambi, TK Negeri Pembina Rimbo Ulu, and TK Negeri Pembina Muara Bulian for their willingness to provide information and grant the author the opportunity to conduct this study. It is hoped that the findings of this research will contribute to the development of Early Childhood Education management and serve as a valuable reference for future studies in the field.

References

- Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in Context: Update to the Social Psychology of Creativity*. Westview Press.
- Aslam, A., Wahab, A. A., Nurdin, D., & Suharto, N. (2022). Kepemimpinan Instruksional Kepala Sekolah dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 6(3), 3954–3961. <https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v6i3.2742>
- Bush, T. (2024). *Theories of Educational Leadership and Management* (5th edn). SAGE Publications.
- Fahmi, Mutiara, R., Oktapiani, O., Sa'adah, N., & Margaret, P. (2026). Penguatan Administrasi dan Manajemen PAUD untuk Meningkatkan Mutu Pendidikan. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 11(2), 267–273.
- Fayol, H. (1949). *General and Industrial Management*. Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons.
- Hakim, S., Muhammad, M., & Saparudin, S. (2024). Implementasi Kompetensi Manajerial dan Supervisi Kepala Sekolah dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru. *Jurnal Pendidikan: Riset Dan Konseptual*, 8(3), 470–480. https://doi.org/10.28926/riset_konseptual.v8i3.1010
- Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (2023). Assessing the Instructional Management Behavior of Principals. *The Elementary School Journal*, 86(2), 217–247.
- Irwanto, Rumahlewang, A., Kamali, A. S., Halimah, L., Prayugo, A., Putra, H. S., Fajar, A., Astuti, E. R. W., Setiyono, A., Herudiati, S. E., & Athalarik, F. M. (2026). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif: Pendekatan Konseptual dan Operasional*. Widina Media Utama.
- Ishak, R. P., Judijanto, L., Apriyanto, Zamroni, Agil, N. M., Ramli, A., Rustam, A., Hasan, L. D., Sudadi, & Sukarana, M. (2025). *Keterampilan Manajerial*. PT Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia.
- Issalillah, F., Masnawati, E., Mardikaningsih, R., Hariani, M., Mamesah, D. A., Jaatsiyah, A. E., & Halizah, S. N. (2024). Strategi Kolaboratif dalam Pengembangan Lingkungan Pembelajaran Kreatif. *NALA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Penelitian, dan Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 4(2), 49–62.
- Lembong, J. M., Lumapow, H. R., & Rotty, V. N. J. (2023). Implementasi Merdeka Belajar sebagai Transformasi Kebijakan Pendidikan. *Jurnal Educatio*, 9(2), 765–777. <https://doi.org/10.31949/educatio.v9i2.4620>

- Miles, M. B., A., M. H., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. SAGE Publications.
- Nasarudin, Mahaly, S., Munjiah, M., Akbar, W. K., Abdurrahman, Wijaya, W., Mappanyompa, Arianto, T., & Arman, Z. (2024). *Studi Kasus dan Multi Situs dalam Pendekatan Kualitatif*. CV Gita Lentera.
- Rahman, T. (2026). *Konsep Dasar PAUD*. Metro Press Indonesia.
- Rambe, R. H., Mukti, Abd., & Siahaan, A. (2023). *Kompetensi Manajerial Kepala dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru*. UMSU Press.
- Sajdah, S. P., Juwita, P., Arkananta, A. M., & Kusumaningrum, H. (2024). Manajemen Sarana Prasarana Berbasis Teknologi untuk Pembelajaran Abad 21. *Jurnal Manajemen Dan Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 3(1), 77–94. <https://doi.org/10.61132/jmpai.v3i1.827>
- Wahyuni, S., Desyanty, E. S., & Sumarsono, R. B. (2021). *Analisis Kompetensi Manajerial Kepala Sekolah dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Kualitas Layanan Pos PAUD di Kota Malang*. CV Bafya Cendekia Indonesia.
- Widodo, W. A., Maryati, M., & Abidin, J. (2025). Manajemen Pengembangan Kompetensi Guru dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pembelajaran di Man 4 Karawang. *JlPI (Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Islam)*, 23(2), 931–939.