

Network Governance And Educational Inclusion: Collaborative Action Programs For Out-Of-School Children In Makassar City, Indonesia

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Abstract: This study examines network governance mechanisms in addressing out-of-school children through the collaborative action-based *Pasti Beraksi* program in Makassar City, Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research analyzes how multiple stakeholders collaborate to tackle educational exclusion through coordinated service delivery and resource sharing. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key government officials, non-governmental organization representatives, and community leaders, supplemented by document analysis and field observations. The study applies Klijn and Koppenjan's network governance framework, examining four key indicators: actors and interdependencies, network management, institutional features, and interaction complexity. Findings reveal a sophisticated collaborative framework where diverse actors including government agencies, NGOs, community organizations, and local volunteers successfully integrate their specialized resources while maintaining organizational autonomy. The Education Office functions as an effective lead facilitator, employing both formal coordination mechanisms and flexible informal communication channels that enable rapid response to emerging cases. The program demonstrates successful hybrid institutionalization combining legal regulatory frameworks with adaptive operational practices, supported by budget integration across multiple agencies and technology-enhanced data management systems. Complex interaction patterns create responsive feedback loops and enable effective complexity management through organized flexibility and adaptive role assignments. The network has achieved measurable success in reducing out-of-school children numbers through multi-level coordination extending from provincial agencies to neighborhood leaders. However, challenges remain in achieving complete frame alignment across all actors and ensuring long-term sustainability beyond individual leadership changes. The study contributes to network governance theory by demonstrating how collaborative approaches can effectively address complex social problems in decentralized governance systems, providing insights for scaling similar educational inclusion initiatives across developing countries.

Keywords: Network Governance, Educational Inclusion, Collaborative Governance, Out-Of-School Children, Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a fundamental pillar for human development and national progress, providing individuals with essential knowledge and skills necessary for productive and meaningful lives (Nurhayati, 2018). As societies increasingly recognize education's role in promoting social mobility, economic growth, and sustainable development, governments worldwide have implemented various policies to ensure universal access to quality education. The empirical theory suggests that educational environments significantly influence human development, with formal education systems structured hierarchically from primary to tertiary levels playing crucial roles in shaping individual and societal outcomes (Sutirna, 2013; Jumali, 2008). Contemporary educational governance has evolved beyond traditional top-down approaches, emphasizing collaborative frameworks that engage multiple stakeholders in addressing complex educational challenges.

The concept of network governance has emerged as a prominent theoretical framework for understanding how multiple actors collaborate to address complex public policy challenges, including educational inclusion. Klijn and Koppenjan (2012) define network governance as a collaborative approach involving various stakeholders who possess different responsibilities and authorities but work together toward common objectives. This theoretical framework encompasses several core elements: actors and their interdependencies, network management mechanisms, institutional features, and complex interactions that generate policy outcomes. Research by Provan and Kenis (2008)

demonstrates that effective network management can enhance coordination and service delivery outcomes, while Leana and Pil (2006) found that collaboration among teachers, parents, and communities significantly improves academic performance. These studies establish the theoretical foundation for understanding how network governance can address educational challenges through coordinated multi-stakeholder approaches.

Despite global commitments to universal education, the phenomenon of out-of-school children remains a persistent challenge worldwide. According to UNESCO (2020), approximately 244 million children and youth are out of school globally, with various socioeconomic, geographical, and institutional factors contributing to educational exclusion. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this situation, highlighting the vulnerability of educational systems and the need for innovative approaches to ensure educational continuity and inclusion. Research indicates that children from marginalized communities, rural areas, and economically disadvantaged backgrounds face disproportionate barriers to educational access, necessitating targeted interventions that address multiple dimensions of educational exclusion simultaneously.

In Indonesia, the challenge of out-of-school children persists despite significant policy initiatives, including the implementation of 9-year and later 12-year compulsory education programs established through Government Regulation No. 47 of 2008 and subsequent policies in 2013. The Indonesian Constitution Article 31 guarantees every citizen's right to quality education, reflecting the government's commitment to educational inclusion. However, UNICEF Indonesia (2022) reports that 4.1 million children aged 7-18 years remain out of school, while the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology documented 75,303 school dropouts in 2021 (Annur, 2022). These statistics reveal the complexity of educational challenges that require comprehensive, multi-sectoral approaches beyond traditional government interventions.

Table 1. complexity of educational challenges

Education Level	Number of Dropouts (2020)	Percentage
Primary (SD/MI/Equivalent)	44,516	59.1%
Junior Secondary (SMP/MTs/Equivalent)	15,042	20.0%
Senior Secondary (SMA/MA)	10,022	13.3%
Vocational Secondary (SMK/MAK)	12,063	16.0%
Total	75,303	100%

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Annur, 2022)

South Sulawesi Province faces particularly significant educational challenges, with 163,940 out-of-school children recorded in 2020 according to Statistics Indonesia (BPS). This situation contributes to relatively low educational indicators, including an average years of schooling (RLS) of 8.38 and expected years of schooling (HLS) of 13.45, ultimately affecting the Human Development Index (HDI) at 71.93, which remains below the national average of 71.94. In response to these challenges, the South Sulawesi Provincial Government has demonstrated commitment through the implementation of the Acceleration Program for Handling Out-of-School Children (PPATS) via Governor Regulation No. 71 of 2020, developed in collaboration with UNICEF's Sulawesi-Maluku region. This policy framework establishes the foundation for innovative approaches to addressing educational exclusion through collaborative governance mechanisms.

The "Pasti Beraksi" (Collaborative Action-Based Out-of-School Children handling) program represents an innovative approach initiated by the South Sulawesi government since 2017, initially implemented in Bone and Takalar regencies. This program has demonstrated measurable success, with 8,195 out-of-school children aged 7-18 years successfully reintegrated into formal and non-formal educational services by 2020. The program's expansion to the provincial level in 2020 through Regional Regulation No. 51 of 2020 reflects its potential as a scalable model for addressing educational exclusion through collaborative governance approaches. In Makassar City specifically, educational authorities reported 3,295 out-of-school children in 2023 (2,240 at primary level and 1,055 at junior secondary level), indicating the ongoing need for effective interventions that address multiple causative factors including economic constraints, family circumstances, and social vulnerabilities.

Previous research on network governance in public policy contexts has provided valuable insights into collaborative approaches to social problems. Rossilawati (2013) examined network governance in improving women's Human

Development Index in Wonogiri Regency, identifying gaps in institutional features and areas requiring development in network governance structures. Similarly, Putri et al. (2022) investigated network governance in preventing child marriage in Lamongan Regency, demonstrating that well-coordinated network structures involving contact, trust, information sharing, and resource exchange could achieve significant outcomes, including a 33% reduction in child marriage rates. However, these studies also identified persistent challenges including limited private sector involvement, insufficient academic participation, budget constraints, and inadequate community understanding of program objectives.

While existing research has explored network governance applications in various social policy contexts, there remains a significant gap in understanding how network governance functions specifically in addressing out-of-school children through collaborative action programs in Indonesian urban contexts. Unlike previous studies that focused on health services or child marriage prevention, this research examines the unique complexities of educational inclusion through multi-stakeholder collaboration, specifically analyzing how different actors (government agencies, NGOs, communities, and private sector) interact, manage resources, and navigate institutional complexities within the Pasti Beraksi program framework. The theoretical and practical significance of this study lies in its potential to provide comprehensive insights into effective network governance mechanisms for educational inclusion, offering evidence-based recommendations for program enhancement and serving as a reference for similar initiatives in other regions. Furthermore, this research addresses critical theoretical gaps in understanding how network governance principles apply to educational policy implementation in decentralized governance systems, contributing to both academic knowledge and practical policy development in Indonesia's educational sector.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to examine network governance in the collaborative action-based out-of-school children handling program (Pasti Beraksi) in Makassar City. Data collection involved in-depth interviews with key informants including the Head of Education Office, Head of Social Affairs Office, Head of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Office, and representatives from non-governmental organizations actively involved in the program implementation. Primary data were gathered through direct field observations, comprehensive interviews, and focus group discussions with stakeholders who possess deep understanding of the program's collaborative mechanisms. Secondary data were obtained from government documents, policy regulations, program reports, and relevant literature supporting the analysis. Data analysis followed the interactive model approach involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing to identify patterns and themes related to network governance indicators including actors and interdependencies, network management, institutional features, and interaction complexity. The study ensured data validity through triangulation of multiple sources, member checking with informants, rich descriptive presentations, and researcher bias clarification, while reliability was maintained through transcript verification, coding consistency, and cross-checking procedures among research team members.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Actors, Interdependency, and Frames

The analysis reveals a complex network of diverse actors actively engaged in addressing out-of-school children through the Pasti Beraksi program in Makassar City. Key governmental actors include the Education Office as the primary coordinator, Social Affairs Office, Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Office (DP3A), Civil Service Police Unit (Satpol PP), and Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda). Non-governmental actors encompass community organizations, religious institutions, local volunteers, children's forums, and the Rapid Response Team (TRC). Each actor maintains distinct organizational mandates while contributing specialized resources and expertise to the collaborative network. The Education Office functions as the lead organization, coordinating policy integration and establishing priority targets through systematic data mapping of out-of-school children.

Actor Category	Specific Actors	Primary Roles	Resource Contributions
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Government	Education Office	Policy coordination, data management	Administrative authority, budget allocation
Government	Social Affairs Office	Social support services	Social assistance programs, family support
Government	DP3A	Child protection	Legal protection, psychosocial support
Government	Satpol PP	Street outreach	Enforcement capacity, field operations
Community	TRC/NGOs	Community mobilization	Local knowledge, volunteer networks
Local	RT/RW/Village	Grassroots identification	Community access, local legitimacy

The interdependency among actors demonstrates a sophisticated resource exchange system where each organization relies on others' specialized capabilities to achieve collective objectives. The Education Office depends on the Social Affairs Office for economic support to vulnerable families, while DP3A provides essential child protection services for cases involving abuse or early marriage. Community-based actors, particularly the TRC and village-level organizations, serve as crucial bridges between formal government policies and grassroots realities, accessing marginalized groups often overlooked by formal education systems. This interdependency creates a robust support network where individual organizational limitations are compensated through collaborative resource sharing and complementary service provision.

The shared frame analysis indicates strong consensus among actors regarding education as a fundamental child right, creating the foundational alignment necessary for effective collaboration. This common understanding transcends individual organizational boundaries, enabling actors to maintain their institutional independence while working toward unified objectives. The theoretical framework proposed by Klijn and Koppenjan (2016) emphasizes that successful network governance requires actors to develop shared problem definitions and solution approaches, which is clearly evident in Makassar's collaborative approach where diverse actors have aligned their perspectives on educational inclusion. The frame alignment extends beyond formal policy statements to include shared values about child welfare, community responsibility, and the importance of addressing multiple contributing factors to educational exclusion.

Despite the strong collaborative foundation, the analysis identifies challenges in achieving complete frame alignment across all participating actors, particularly regarding role expectations and contribution levels between formal institutions and community organizations. To strengthen actor engagement and network effectiveness, the program should establish formal mechanisms for regular frame alignment discussions and role clarification sessions, as recommended by Provan and Kenis (2008) for enhancing network coordination and reducing potential conflicts arising from divergent organizational perspectives.

Network Management

Network management in the Pasti Beraksi program demonstrates a sophisticated coordination structure with the Education Office functioning as the primary network facilitator and lead organization. The management approach encompasses formal coordination mechanisms including regular inter-agency meetings, technical coordination forums, and integrated data management systems. Bappeda provides crucial support by incorporating the program into the Regional Budget (APBD) and facilitating cross-departmental collaboration through official forums and intensive coordination meetings. The management structure extends beyond governmental levels to include community-based coordination through RT/RW (neighborhood) leaders, school principals, and parent groups, creating a multi-level governance system that ensures comprehensive coverage and responsive service delivery.

Table 2. Management Levels, Coordination, and Communication in Program Implementation

Management Level	Coordination Mechanisms	Key Functions	Communication Tools
Strategic	Mayor's Decree, Official Forum	Policy direction, resource allocation	Formal meetings, official documents
Operational	Inter-agency coordination	Task distribution, progress monitoring	WhatsApp groups, coordination meetings

Community	RT/RW coordination	Local identification, family engagement	Informal discussions, community meetings
Technical	School-level coordination	Student reintegration, academic support	Direct communication, reporting systems

The management system employs both formal and informal coordination mechanisms to maintain network cohesion and operational effectiveness. Formal structures include the Mayor's Decree establishing the out-of-school children handling forum, providing legal legitimacy and institutional framework for collaborative action. Technical coordination operates through community-based reporting systems where community members report cases directly through established channels, followed by rapid response coordination involving relevant agencies. Communication facilitation occurs through multiple channels including official coordination meetings, WhatsApp groups among stakeholders, and informal discussion forums, ensuring information flows efficiently across network boundaries while maintaining flexibility for rapid response to emerging situations.

The network management approach reveals characteristics of what Klijn and Koppenjan (2016) describe as facilitative leadership, where the lead organization focuses on enabling collaboration rather than controlling network activities. This approach allows individual actors to maintain their organizational autonomy while contributing to collective objectives through coordinated action. The management style demonstrates adaptive capacity by employing context-specific interventions based on case characteristics, such as directing economic-related cases to Social Affairs while routing abuse cases to DP3A. However, the analysis also reveals dependence on informal relationships and personal initiatives, which, while providing flexibility, may create sustainability challenges when key personnel change positions.

To enhance long-term network sustainability and reduce dependence on individual relationships, the program should develop standardized operating procedures for inter-agency collaboration and establish formal monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as suggested by Agranoff and McGuire (2003) for strengthening network management capacity and ensuring continuity beyond individual leadership changes.

Institutional Features

The institutional framework supporting the Pasti Beraksi program demonstrates strong formal legitimization through multiple regulatory instruments including South Sulawesi Provincial Regulation No. 51 of 2020, Mayor's Decree establishing the handling forum, and inter-agency assignment letters. Each participating agency has integrated out-of-school children handling into their respective Budget Implementation Documents (DPA), indicating institutional embedding beyond project-based collaboration. The regulatory framework provides legal foundation for cross-agency personnel involvement and establishes binding administrative and operational procedures. This formal institutionalization creates stability and ensures program continuity despite potential changes in leadership or organizational structure, representing a significant advancement from informal cooperative arrangements to embedded institutional practice.

Table 3. Institutional Elements Supporting Program Implementation and Sustainability"

Institutional Element	Formal Structures	Functions	Sustainability Mechanisms
Legal Framework	Provincial Regulation No. 51/2020	Legal authorization	Binding regulatory compliance
Local Authorization	Mayor's Decree	Operational legitimacy	Official institutional mandate
Budget Integration	DPA inclusion across agencies	Financial sustainability	Multi-agency budget allocation
Coordination Forum	Official handling forum	Structured collaboration	Regular meeting schedules
Data Systems	SIPBM ATS application	Information management	Technology-based tracking
Capacity Building	Training programs, technical assistance	Skill development	Continuous learning mechanisms

The institutional architecture combines formal structures with flexible operational mechanisms, creating what can be characterized as hybrid institutionalization. While collaboration operates through official regulations and budget allocations, daily coordination relies heavily on informal communication channels such as WhatsApp groups, direct community reporting, and personal relationships among stakeholders. This hybrid approach accelerates information flow and reduces bureaucratic delays in case handling while maintaining formal accountability structures. The institutional design includes adaptive mechanisms such as the RT/RW-based SIPBM ATS application, enabling real-time tracking of out-of-school children at the micro level, demonstrating institutional capacity for technological innovation and data-driven decision making.

The institutional features analysis aligns with Klijn and Koppenjan (2016)'s conceptualization of network institutionalization, where formal rules and procedures coexist with informal practices to create effective governance arrangements. The regulatory framework provides necessary stability and legitimacy, while informal mechanisms enable flexibility and responsiveness to local conditions. However, the analysis reveals uneven institutional capacity across participating organizations, with some agencies possessing greater resources and authority than others. This asymmetry is managed through collaborative mechanisms where resource-rich organizations assume facilitating roles while community-based actors contribute local knowledge and social access.

To further strengthen institutional sustainability, the program should develop comprehensive standard operating procedures that formalize successful informal practices while maintaining operational flexibility, following recommendations by Sørensen and Torfing (2009) for balancing institutional stability with adaptive capacity in collaborative governance arrangements.

Interactions and Complexity

The interaction patterns within the Pasti Beraksi network demonstrate high-intensity, multi-directional communication flows that extend across governmental hierarchy and community boundaries. Interactions occur through multiple channels including formal coordination meetings, technical working groups, informal WhatsApp communications, and community-level discussions involving RT/RW leaders, parents, and local organizations. The communication system operates bidirectionally, enabling both top-down policy dissemination and bottom-up problem reporting, creating responsive feedback loops that enhance network adaptability. Complex interaction patterns emerge from the involvement of actors operating at different organizational levels, from provincial agencies to neighborhood leaders, each contributing distinct perspectives and capabilities while navigating different institutional constraints and operational procedures.

Table 4. Program Communication Dynamics by Interaction Type

Interaction Type	Participants	Communication Channels	Frequency	Primary Functions
Strategic	Department heads, Mayor	Formal meetings, official documents	Monthly/Quarterly	Policy decisions, resource allocation
Operational	Technical staff, coordinators	WhatsApp groups, coordination meetings	Weekly/Daily	Case management, progress tracking
Community	RT/RW, parents, volunteers	Informal discussions, community meetings	Ongoing	Problem identification, family engagement
Service Delivery	Teachers, social workers, children	Direct interaction, counseling sessions	As needed	Individual case handling, support provision

The complexity of network interactions stems from multiple interdependent factors including diverse actor motivations, varying organizational cultures, different resource capabilities, and multi-dimensional problem characteristics. Out-of-school children issues intersect with economic, social, cultural, and educational factors, requiring coordinated responses that address root causes rather than symptoms alone. This complexity manifests in challenges such as overlapping agency jurisdictions, multi-level bureaucratic procedures, and rigid budget structures that sometimes conflict with flexible service delivery requirements. However, the network has developed adaptive mechanisms to manage complexity, including rapid response teams, flexible role assignments based on case characteristics, and informal communication channels that bypass bureaucratic delays while maintaining

accountability.

The interaction and complexity dynamics reflect what Klijn and Koppenjan (2016) describe as emergent network properties, where collective outcomes arise from complex interactions among autonomous actors rather than hierarchical control mechanisms. The network demonstrates capacity for self-organization and adaptive response, with actors adjusting their roles and interactions based on changing circumstances and emerging needs. The complexity is managed through what can be termed "organized flexibility," where formal structures provide stability while informal mechanisms enable rapid adaptation to local conditions and unexpected challenges.

Despite the sophisticated interaction system, complexity management remains challenged by communication gaps between different organizational levels and inconsistent coordination mechanisms across various program components. To enhance complexity management while maintaining network responsiveness, the program should implement systematic feedback mechanisms and establish clear protocols for handling multi-agency cases, as recommended by Koppenjan and Klijn (2004) for improving coordination in complex policy networks while preserving adaptive capacity.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of network governance in the Pasti Beraksi program demonstrates a sophisticated collaborative framework that effectively addresses out-of-school children challenges in Makassar City through multi-stakeholder engagement and coordinated service delivery. The network successfully integrates diverse actors including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, community groups, and local volunteers, each contributing specialized resources and expertise while maintaining organizational autonomy within a shared framework of educational inclusion. The program exhibits strong network management characteristics with the Education Office functioning as an effective lead facilitator, employing both formal coordination mechanisms and flexible informal communication channels that enable rapid response to emerging cases. Institutional features reveal successful hybrid institutionalization combining legal regulatory frameworks with adaptive operational practices, supported by budget integration across multiple agencies and technology-enhanced data management systems. The complex interaction patterns within the network demonstrate high-intensity, multi-directional communication flows that create responsive feedback loops and enable effective complexity management through organized flexibility and adaptive role assignments. To enhance program sustainability and replicability, future initiatives should establish formal standard operating procedures for inter-agency collaboration, strengthen institutional capacity building through regular training programs, develop comprehensive monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and expand private sector and academic partnerships to create a scalable model for collaborative educational inclusion initiatives across Indonesia and other developing countries.

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