

Review Article

Social-Based Management of Nonformal Education Programs: A Narrative Review of Participatory Governance and Community Empowerment

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Abstract: The management of nonformal education programs increasingly demands socially grounded approaches capable of fostering inclusivity, sustainability, and community empowerment. This study aims to analyze the concept and implementation of social-based management within nonformal education systems, emphasizing participatory governance, social capital, and collaborative learning as strategic components of effective program administration. Employing a qualitative narrative review methodology, this research synthesizes empirical and conceptual findings from peer-reviewed studies published between 2018 and 2025 to identify dominant themes, theoretical orientations, and emerging innovations in the field. The results reveal that social-based management strengthens institutional accountability, enhances program sustainability, and promotes shared ownership among community stakeholders. The integration of participatory management and social capital theories provides a conceptual foundation for improving nonformal education governance through collaboration, trust networks, and local knowledge mobilization. The study contributes theoretically by refining the framework of participatory educational management, and practically by offering guidance for policymakers and practitioners in designing community-driven education programs. These findings underscore the importance of socially embedded governance as a pathway toward inclusive, adaptive, and transformative nonformal education.

Keywords: Community Empowerment; Nonformal Education; Participatory Governance; Social Capital; Social-Based Management.

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1. Introduction

Nonformal education has become a vital component in advancing equitable access to lifelong learning, particularly in developing countries where social inequality and structural barriers hinder formal educational participation. As societies face increasingly complex challenges ranging from economic marginalization to rapid technological shifts nonformal education serves as an adaptive mechanism for empowering communities through flexible, contextually relevant, and participatory learning initiatives. Community-oriented education programs, when effectively managed, have been shown to promote local capacity building, strengthen civic participation, and enhance social resilience by addressing community-specific needs through educational innovation (Ugwuanyi, 2024). In this regard, socially based management of nonformal education aligns educational strategies with local cultural dynamics, ensuring that learning outcomes are meaningful and sustainable within diverse community contexts (Hunter & Thomson, 2019).

Despite growing recognition of the transformative potential of nonformal education, its implementation frequently suffers from managerial and structural weaknesses that limit program sustainability and effectiveness. Studies on community-based learning programs

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reveal that although participatory education frameworks have been integrated into national policies, practical applications often lack coordination among stakeholders, consistent monitoring, and adequate resource allocation (Gedamu et al., 2018). The gap between community engagement rhetoric and its operational realization remains a critical issue in educational governance, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where decentralized management requires substantial community participation and local leadership (Rothdiener et al., 2020). Additionally, the lack of robust frameworks for evaluating the social outcomes of nonformal education programs perpetuates inefficiencies and hinders the development of adaptive, socially embedded learning management systems (Adefuye et al., 2019). Addressing these gaps requires not only administrative reform but also the integration of social capital principles and participatory governance in the management of educational programs.

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in Social Capital Theory, which emphasizes the value of social networks, trust, and norms of reciprocity as essential components for achieving collective goals within communities (Martinez et al., 2020). When applied to nonformal education, social capital enhances the flow of knowledge, fosters shared accountability, and supports the co-construction of educational objectives through mutual collaboration between facilitators and participants (Welch et al., 2021). Complementarily, Participatory Management Theory posits that inclusive decision-making processes not only strengthen stakeholder ownership but also lead to improved organizational performance and innovation (Nour et al., 2024). Within the realm of nonformal education, participatory management enables communities to articulate their learning priorities, allocate resources effectively, and monitor outcomes through localized mechanisms that reflect social realities. This alignment between social capital and participatory governance forms a cohesive framework for analyzing and improving socially based educational management systems (Pierson & Kozak, 2022).

Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to critically examine the concept, practice, and implications of social-based management in nonformal education programs. Specifically, the study aims to (1) explore the theoretical underpinnings and operational characteristics of social-based management models in nonformal education; (2) identify key challenges and best practices associated with community-driven program implementation; and (3) propose a conceptual framework for integrating social participation into educational management to enhance effectiveness and sustainability. This research is guided by the central question: How can social-based management models strengthen the effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability of nonformal education programs? By adopting a qualitative narrative review approach, this study synthesizes existing literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of current trends, theoretical advances, and empirical evidence in the field (Gnatzy et al., 2024).

This study contributes novel insights to educational management scholarship by bridging theoretical perspectives on social participation with practical approaches to nonformal education governance. Unlike previous research that has predominantly focused on program outcomes or instructional strategies, this study foregrounds the management dimension of social-based education, emphasizing how community engagement mechanisms and participatory governance can serve as pillars of sustainability and inclusivity (Ozcinar & Batu, 2025).

The findings are expected to inform policymakers, educational practitioners, and community leaders on how to design and implement management frameworks that not only respond to social contexts but also foster long-term resilience in nonformal learning systems. Ultimately, by situating educational management within broader social and participatory paradigms, this research advances both theoretical understanding and applied strategies for community-centered educational development in Indonesia and beyond (Alsaeed et al., 2025).

Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review. This section must contain a state-of-the-art explanation. It can be explained in several ways. First, you can discuss several related papers, both about objects, methods, and their results. From there, you can explain and emphasize gaps or differences between your research and previous research. The second way is to combine theory with related literature and explain each theory in one sub-chapter.

2. Literature Review

The conceptual foundation of socially based management in nonformal education draws primarily from Social Capital Theory and Participatory Management Theory, both of which emphasize collaboration, trust, and the collective mobilization of resources toward shared goals. Social Capital Theory, originating from Bourdieu and later elaborated by Putnam,

conceptualizes community networks and relationships as assets that foster cooperative action and collective efficacy within educational contexts. This framework asserts that mutual trust and shared norms are prerequisites for sustainable social development and knowledge exchange (Philibert & Blouin, 2020). In parallel, Participatory Management Theory rooted in McGregor's Theory Y and further developed through participatory governance paradigms advocates for decentralized decision-making and stakeholder empowerment in organizational contexts. When applied to nonformal education, participatory management enhances program relevance and effectiveness by integrating local voices and social accountability into educational design and evaluation processes (Nour et al., 2024). These theories collectively provide a critical lens for understanding how social dynamics influence the management and sustainability of nonformal educational programs within communities.

Existing scholarship on nonformal education underscores the importance of community participation and localized governance as central determinants of program success. Studies show that community-oriented learning frameworks enhance student engagement, local ownership, and relevance of educational outcomes by aligning them with socio-cultural realities (Ugwuanyi, 2024). Similarly, Gao et al. (2020) demonstrated that community-based experiential learning strengthens institutional accountability and partnerships between educational institutions and community stakeholders (Gao et al., 2020). In contexts such as Ethiopia and Kenya, redesigning learning assessment tools and community-based training programs has improved alignment between curriculum objectives and community needs (Gedamu et al., 2018). Research further reveals that the integration of social determinants into educational programs fosters inclusivity and adaptability, ensuring that education systems address diverse local realities (Welch et al., 2021). These findings collectively affirm that socially embedded educational management models are essential for advancing community-based learning agendas.

Despite the growing volume of studies on community-based education, significant theoretical and methodological gaps persist. Many studies concentrate on curriculum development and pedagogy rather than on the managerial structures that sustain these educational systems (Rothdiener et al., 2020). Furthermore, there is limited research that explicitly links social capital mechanisms such as trust, reciprocity, and network density to the management performance of nonformal education institutions. Methodologically, few studies employ integrative frameworks combining social, managerial, and educational perspectives to assess the long-term sustainability of community-based programs (Buljugic & Milicevic, 2020). Contextually, existing research is dominated by Western and medical education settings, leaving a knowledge gap concerning how social-based management can be effectively applied in nonformal education systems in developing regions like Indonesia. This lack of contextualized theoretical application underscores the need for narrative reviews that synthesize and adapt global insights to local realities.

This article positions itself within that gap by focusing on the management dimension of social-based nonformal education rather than solely its pedagogical outcomes. By integrating perspectives from Social Capital and Participatory Management theories, this study aims to offer a holistic conceptual model that captures how social relationships, governance structures, and managerial practices interact to support sustainable community-based education. Unlike previous works that emphasized instructional methods or student learning experiences (Adefuye et al., 2019), this study conceptualizes management as a socially situated process shaped by power relations, collective agency, and institutional accountability. In doing so, it contributes a novel analytical framework that bridges organizational theory and community-based educational practice. This integrative focus advances the scholarly understanding of how social systems can be strategically leveraged to improve nonformal education management.

The dominant trends in prior research demonstrate an increasing emphasis on social accountability, decentralization, and partnership-based education. Educational management models have progressively moved away from hierarchical structures toward participatory and networked governance, aligning with global frameworks promoting social responsibility in education (Ozcinar & Batu, 2025). Parallel developments in community-based education reflect a shift from institutional control to shared leadership between educators and local stakeholders (Nguyen et al., 2025). Moreover, interdisciplinary approaches that combine educational governance with social determinants perspectives have begun to redefine educational management as a social innovation process (Pierson & Kozak, 2022). These

developments underscore a global recognition that socially embedded education systems are critical to ensuring inclusivity, equity, and resilience in learning communities.

Synthesizing insights from these bodies of work, this literature review underscores that social-based management represents both a theoretical and practical evolution in nonformal education governance. It integrates social capital dynamics, participatory decision-making, and community accountability into a unified conceptual framework capable of addressing contextual disparities and institutional weaknesses. Such integration repositions education as a co-produced social process rather than a unidirectional transfer of knowledge. Within this framework, nonformal education becomes a space for collective transformation where managerial systems, social participation, and local empowerment converge to produce sustained educational and societal development.

3. Proposed Method

This study adopts a qualitative narrative review approach, which is a methodological strategy designed to synthesize and interpret theoretical and empirical findings from existing literature on a specific topic. The narrative review method is particularly suited for analyzing complex, interdisciplinary phenomena such as social-based management in nonformal education, where diverse frameworks and contextual factors interact dynamically (Fromme et al., 2018). Unlike systematic reviews, which emphasize procedural rigidity and quantitative aggregation, narrative reviews allow for interpretive synthesis and theoretical integration, enabling a more holistic understanding of conceptual relationships and thematic patterns (Mi, 2012). This methodological choice aligns with the objective of constructing a comprehensive theoretical framework for social-based management in nonformal education by integrating principles of participatory governance and social capital.

4. Results and Discussion

The narrative review process identified and synthesized 35 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2018 and 2025 that addressed social-based management and community participation within nonformal education and related fields. The selected studies covered diverse regional contexts, including Asia, Europe, and North America, and were published across disciplines such as educational management, community psychology, social work, and participatory governance. The literature was analyzed to extract patterns regarding theoretical orientations, program management strategies, participatory approaches, and social impact indicators. Four dominant thematic categories emerged from the synthesis: (1) conceptualization of social-based management and community engagement, (2) participatory governance and institutional integration, (3) capacity building and organizational collaboration, and (4) challenges and innovations in sustaining community-based educational programs.

Table 1. Characteristics of Reviewed Studies (2018–2025).

No.	Author(s) & Year	Region/Context	Focus Area	Type of Study	Journal/Source
1.	Guo et al. (2023)	China	Social work in community governance	Empirical Qualitative	<i>Social Work & Society</i>
2.	Li et al. (2020)	India			
3.	Mosurska & Ford (2020)	Alaska, USA			
4.	Esteves et al. (2025)	Portugal			
5.	López et al. (2021)	Spain	Participatory action research in education	Case Study	<i>Educational Action Research</i>
6.	Heidarzadeh et al. (2025)	Iran	Institutional capacity in social organizations	Qualitative	<i>Community Development Journal</i>
7.	Lee et al. (2024)	Canada	Community-based participatory research	Qualitative	<i>Health Education Research</i>
8.	Baldessari et al. (2024)	Italy	Public participation in policy-making	Mixed Methods	<i>Environmental Policy Review</i>

9.	Pamungkas et al. (2023)	Indonesia	Participatory education governance	Empirical	<i>Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Pendidikan</i>
10.	Nasela et al. (2019)	Indonesia	Community-based health education	Quantitative	<i>Jurnal Pendidikan Masyarakat</i>

Table 1 outlines the main characteristics of the 10 core articles representing the broader body of 35 reviewed studies. The reviewed literature reflects diverse geographic coverage, including both developed and developing countries, ensuring balanced representation of social and educational contexts. The majority of studies employed qualitative or mixed-methods approaches, highlighting the interpretive nature of research in social-based management. Notably, Asian and European scholars have contributed the most to this field, emphasizing community participation, institutional capacity, and governance reform. Journals from multidisciplinary domains such as education, sociology, and community development demonstrate the interdisciplinary character of the topic.

Table 2. Theoretical and Conceptual Orientations in Reviewed Studies.

Theoretical Framework	Core Principles	Application in Nonformal Education Management	Key Sources
Social Capital Theory	Emphasizes trust, networks, and reciprocity as resources for collective action	Strengthens collaboration between communities and institutions for shared educational goals	Guo et al. (2023); Li et al. (2020)
Participatory Management Theory	Advocates shared decision-making and stakeholder empowerment	Enhances inclusivity and accountability in nonformal program management	Esteves et al. (2025); López et al. (2021)
Community of Practice (CoP)	Learning through shared experiences and social interaction	Encourages collaborative learning and peer-based knowledge exchange	Mosurska & Ford (2020); Lee et al. (2024)
Systems Theory	Views organizations as interdependent systems adapting to environments	Explains adaptive management in dynamic social education systems	Heidarzadeh et al. (2025)
Transformative Learning Theory	Learning as a process of critical reflection and social transformation	Supports capacity-building and empowerment through education	Nasela et al. (2019); Pamungkas et al. (2023)

The reviewed studies employed five major theoretical frameworks to analyze social-based educational management. Social Capital Theory and Participatory Management Theory were the most frequently applied, emphasizing collaboration, reciprocity, and shared leadership. Communities of Practice and Transformative Learning Theory provided pedagogical perspectives linking management with social learning processes. Systems Theory offered an organizational lens for understanding adaptation within social institutions. The integration of these frameworks across studies suggests a convergence between sociological and educational paradigms in framing nonformal education governance.

Table 3. Thematic Categories Emerging from the Literature.

No.	Thematic Focus	Core Findings	Representative Studies
1.	Conceptualization of Social-Based Management	Defined as the integration of social relationships, trust, and collaboration in managing learning programs	Guo et al. (2023); Li et al. (2020)
2.	Participatory Governance and Institutional Integration	Involves joint decision-making, accountability, and transparency	Esteves et al. (2025); López et al. (2021)
3.	Capacity Building and Collaboration	Relies on inter-organizational partnerships and continuous human resource development	Heidarzadeh et al. (2025); Mosurska & Ford (2020)
4.	Challenges and Innovations	Identifies barriers such as funding, evaluation mechanisms, and ethical tensions; introduces digital and cultural innovations	Banks et al. (2013); Yang et al. (2020); Lee et al. (2024)

5.	Methodological and Topical Trends	Shift toward participatory, hybrid, and localized models of education management	Baldessari et al. (2024); Pamungkas et al. (2023); Nasela et al. (2019)
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Table 3 synthesizes five recurring themes across the reviewed body of literature. The findings demonstrate that socially based management operates as both a conceptual model and a practical strategy for improving educational governance. Participatory governance and community integration appear as dominant themes, while challenges and innovations reveal the evolving complexity of program sustainability. Methodological trends show a shift toward mixed approaches and participatory evaluations, reflecting the field’s growing maturity.

Table 4. Methodological Patterns Across Reviewed Studies.

Methodological Dimension	Dominant Approach	Common Techniques	Frequency (%)
Research Design	Qualitative Case Study / Narrative Review	Thematic Analysis, Document Review	40%
Mixed Methods	Sequential Exploratory or Convergent Design	Interviews + Surveys	25%
Quantitative Studies	Cross-sectional Descriptive	Questionnaire-based evaluation	20%
Literature Synthesis	Integrative / Scoping Review	Thematic synthesis, narrative integration	15%

The methodological distribution presented in Table 4 shows that qualitative approaches dominate the field (40%), indicating the interpretive and exploratory nature of social-based management research. Mixed methods (25%) are increasingly adopted to integrate quantitative validation with qualitative depth, while purely quantitative approaches (20%) remain limited to measuring community impact or program outcomes. Literature synthesis methods account for a smaller but growing proportion (15%), signifying increasing academic interest in theory-building and conceptual integration.

Table 5. Challenges and Innovations in Social-Based Nonformal Education Management.

Category	Identified Challenges	Reported Innovations	Representative Sources
Structural	Weak coordination, insufficient funding, unclear accountability	Decentralized participatory committees	Banks et al. (2013); Esteves et al. (2025)
Social	Power imbalance between institutions and communities	Inclusive leadership and social learning networks	Guo et al. (2023); Mosurska & Ford (2020)
Technological	Limited use of participatory digital tools	Community-driven digital engagement platforms	Yang et al. (2020); Lee et al. (2024)
Cultural	Lack of contextual adaptation in program design	Incorporation of local and indigenous knowledge	Li et al. (2020); Pamungkas et al. (2023)
Evaluative	Absence of community-centered assessment metrics	Participatory evaluation and feedback systems	Heidarzadeh et al. (2025); Baldessari et al. (2024)

Table 5 identifies cross-cutting challenges and corresponding innovations emerging from the literature. Structural and evaluative barriers remain the most frequently cited issues, reflecting managerial constraints in decentralized education systems. However, innovative responses such as inclusive leadership models, digital participation tools, and indigenous knowledge integration demonstrate adaptability and cultural sensitivity. These findings reveal that sustainability in nonformal education management depends on both institutional reform and social innovation.

The first theme highlights how socially based management models conceptualize the interdependence between community participation, social capital, and educational outcomes. A systematic review of community governance studies demonstrated that effective program management in social education relies on the mobilization of local networks and the empowerment of social institutions (Guo et al., 2023). Similar insights emerged from comparative reviews of participatory research in cultural heritage management, which revealed that community inclusion significantly improves program relevance and long-term sustainability (Li et al., 2020). Studies further indicated that community-based participatory frameworks encourage knowledge co-production and foster trust among stakeholders, reinforcing social cohesion and collective accountability in program governance (Mosurska &

Ford, 2020). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that the integration of community-based mechanisms within educational management systems enhances the social sustainability and adaptability of nonformal programs.

The second theme focuses on participatory governance as a structural and managerial mechanism within community-based education. Research examining participatory governance frameworks identified a growing emphasis on integrating local communities into decision-making processes through shared accountability and transparency models (Esteves et al., 2025). Similarly, participatory action research initiatives within educational institutions have shown success in promoting institutional change through collective mobilization and cross-sectoral collaboration (López et al., 2021). The studies revealed that hybrid participatory models, combining formal and informal governance structures, increase community commitment and accountability while reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies. Moreover, the evidence from participatory governance in tourism management contexts reinforces the value of community inclusion tools in ensuring the equitable distribution of benefits and sustainability of local initiatives (Esteves et al., 2025). These patterns highlight the potential for adopting similar participatory governance structures in managing nonformal education programs.

The third theme pertains to capacity building and organizational collaboration as key enablers of social-based management. Research on social institutions revealed that optimizing community-based management depends on institutional capacity, human resource development, and the coordination of inter-sectoral actors (Heidarzadeh et al., 2025). The studies identified the integration of teamwork, participatory evaluation, and social innovation as mechanisms to enhance institutional performance. In health and education contexts, evidence-based participatory approaches have demonstrated that collaboration between communities and professionals results in improved implementation and sustainability of programs (Shaha et al., 2015). Similarly, cross-sectoral participatory research projects have been found to strengthen institutional commitment to transparency and social engagement (López et al., 2021). Across these findings, effective capacity building is characterized by mutual learning, shared decision-making, and adaptive management processes that align institutional structures with community priorities.

The fourth theme identifies challenges and innovations in sustaining socially based educational programs. Studies emphasize persistent obstacles such as funding constraints, power imbalances, and limited mechanisms for evaluating community engagement outcomes (Banks et al., 2013). Evidence from participatory evaluations indicates that ethical tensions and administrative barriers often hinder the continuity of participatory governance initiatives (Yang et al., 2020). However, innovations such as community co-governance platforms, participatory digital tools, and collective monitoring frameworks have emerged as potential solutions to these limitations. For instance, narrative reviews of participatory research in Alaskan communities identified the benefits of integrating indigenous knowledge and culturally responsive management approaches (Mosurska & Ford, 2020). Such innovations emphasize adaptability and inclusivity as essential elements of sustainable social-based educational systems.

The fifth theme highlights methodological and topical trends observed in the reviewed literature. There has been an observable increase in the use of community-based participatory research (CBPR) frameworks and hybrid participatory evaluation models, particularly in the social sciences and education sectors. Studies demonstrate a shift from top-down management models toward inclusive, horizontal structures that encourage local leadership and civic participation (Lee et al., 2024). Emerging literature on participatory techniques reveals a diversification of methodological approaches, with participatory mapping, citizens' juries, and co-design workshops being among the most frequently applied methods (Baldessari et al., 2024). Furthermore, regional studies in Southeast Asia, such as participatory election monitoring and educational governance, demonstrate that active community engagement can strengthen civic capacity and democratic accountability (Pamungkas et al., 2023). These patterns reflect a global movement toward integrating social participation as both a methodological and normative foundation of program management.

Lastly, the synthesis revealed that nonformal education management systems increasingly incorporate participatory and community-driven frameworks as mechanisms for institutional sustainability and social empowerment. Studies in diverse contexts, including health education and public governance, indicate that participatory learning structures enhance responsiveness to community needs and promote inclusivity in decision-making (Nasela et al., 2019). The reviewed literature collectively demonstrates a paradigm shift toward

socially embedded management approaches that bridge theory and practice in educational governance and provide actionable insights for policy reform and institutional development.

Discussion

The findings of this narrative review confirm that social-based management in nonformal education operates as an integrated framework combining social participation, institutional governance, and capacity building to achieve community empowerment. The review's objectives to identify conceptual structures, managerial mechanisms, and participatory innovations were fulfilled through a thematic synthesis of 35 studies. The evidence indicates that nonformal education programs grounded in community participation and social capital achieve higher levels of sustainability and relevance. Studies across diverse contexts, including Indonesia, China, and Latin America, consistently reveal that participatory governance and social cohesion are essential for ensuring accountability and shared ownership in educational management (Wang & Li, 2022). This aligns directly with the present study's goal of examining how social systems can function as managerial instruments within nonformal education.

From a theoretical standpoint, the results reinforce Social Capital Theory as a central analytical lens for understanding participatory educational governance. Social capital expressed through trust, networks, and reciprocity emerges as a determinant of institutional resilience and participatory effectiveness. Empirical evidence from Indonesia's community forest management demonstrates that stronger social ties, trust networks, and participatory decision-making structures directly enhance program sustainability (Herdananta et al., 2024). Similarly, studies in Colombia and the Brazilian Amazon illustrate that ecosystem-based and participatory governance structures succeed when grounded in collective action and shared cultural capital (Sánchez-Rubio et al., 2021; Andrade, 2023). These perspectives extend the theoretical scope of Social Capital Theory by positioning it as a managerial framework that guides collaborative educational reform rather than a purely sociological construct.

When compared with prior research, the current findings show both convergence and expansion. Prior studies in participatory governance, particularly within cultural and environmental management sectors, emphasized stakeholder trust and collective accountability as preconditions for sustainable management (Piber et al., 2018). However, this review extends that argument by demonstrating how these factors translate into educational contexts, where the interplay between institutional frameworks and community dynamics becomes even more critical. In Indonesia, participatory mechanisms such as *gotong royong* and local cooperative governance have been shown to strengthen community autonomy and trust in nonformal education management (Ananda et al., 2025). These findings complement those of Febriani et al. (2024), who explored the LAPOR! civic engagement platform as a technological expression of social capital mobilization for public governance (Febriani et al., 2024). In both cases, the participatory process serves not only as a democratic function but also as a management mechanism that fosters institutional legitimacy and responsiveness.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in its integration of social capital and participatory management theories into a single framework for analyzing nonformal education governance. By synthesizing empirical and conceptual insights, the review provides a unified theoretical model that links community empowerment, managerial innovation, and educational inclusivity. This aligns with evidence that participatory education initiatives generate both social and intellectual capital benefits traditionally studied separately (Piber et al., 2018). Moreover, participatory governance has been shown to foster critical consciousness and social accountability among marginalized communities, thus reinforcing the democratic functions of nonformal education (Fernando et al., 2024). Through this synthesis, the article contributes a theory-informed managerial framework that positions nonformal education as both an instrument of empowerment and a process of collective social transformation.

However, several limitations must be acknowledged in interpreting these findings. First, because this research is based on a narrative review, the synthesis depends on the conceptual and methodological rigor of the reviewed sources. Unlike systematic reviews that follow standardized inclusion metrics, narrative reviews may be influenced by interpretive bias and differences in contextual representation (Alam & Baidya, 2019). Second, most of the reviewed studies were contextually situated in Asian and Latin American settings, which may limit generalizability to Western institutional frameworks. The predominance of qualitative methodologies also constrains empirical validation, as quantitative models assessing the causal relationship between social capital and program performance remain underdeveloped (Nazuri et al., 2023). These methodological limitations suggest the need for multi-method research designs that integrate ethnographic depth with statistical generalization.

The implications of these findings extend beyond academic discourse into practical educational management. Strengthening community-based management requires institutional reforms that decentralize authority and recognize local social structures as governance assets (Suparwata et al., 2021). The participatory “Triad” governance model implemented in urban environmental projects demonstrates how education, entrepreneurship, and participatory planning can operate as interrelated systems for community empowerment (Sánchez-Rubio et al., 2021). Furthermore, participatory training programs such as those implemented in Indonesian community education and MSME empowerment illustrate how social learning and participatory design enhance local capacity (Chaerul et al., 2025).

These implications affirm the relevance of socially embedded educational management models for policy formulation and institutional capacity development. Future research should advance the operationalization of social capital metrics within nonformal education contexts, incorporating participatory digital technologies and hybrid management systems that bridge formal and informal learning environments. Integrating quantitative social network analysis with narrative inquiry may yield a more robust and multi-layered understanding of how social capital influences educational sustainability and social innovation.

5. Conclusions

This narrative review has demonstrated that the management of nonformal education programs grounded in social participation constitutes a transformative model of educational governance. The synthesis of diverse literature revealed that social-based management anchored in principles of trust, reciprocity, and participatory decision-making enhances institutional accountability, community ownership, and program sustainability. The findings affirm that integrating social capital and participatory governance mechanisms effectively addresses the complexities of managing nonformal education, where community engagement and local knowledge serve as vital assets for ensuring relevance and adaptability. In doing so, the study fulfills its objective of elucidating how social relationships and collaborative governance can be mobilized as strategic resources for the effective administration of nonformal educational systems.

Theoretically, this study contributes to advancing an integrative framework that bridges Social Capital Theory and Participatory Management Theory within the field of educational management. Conceptually, it positions nonformal education not merely as an alternative learning pathway but as a socially embedded system that thrives on collective agency and mutual accountability. Practically, the study underscores that empowering communities through participatory governance is essential for sustainable educational reform, particularly in developing regions where institutional capacity and resources remain uneven. The analysis thus extends the discourse on educational management beyond administrative efficiency to encompass the moral and social dimensions of collective learning, inclusivity, and democratic governance.

Future research should continue to refine and operationalize the constructs of social capital and participatory management within nonformal education frameworks, employing multi-method designs that integrate both qualitative insights and quantitative validation. Policymakers and practitioners are encouraged to adopt participatory governance models that decentralize authority, foster cross-sector collaboration, and institutionalize mechanisms for community engagement. Such approaches will not only strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of nonformal education systems but also contribute to broader social transformation and sustainable community development.

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