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School Committee Empowerment Strategy in Improving the Image of Elementary Schools in Salang District, Simeulue Regency

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to analyse the empowerment strategy of school committees in improving the image of elementary schools in Salang District, Simeulue Regency. The main focus of the research includes three dimensions of empowerment: partnership, promotion, and solidarity, which ergonomically shape public trust in basic education institutions. **Methods:** This study used a qualitative descriptive field approach with observation techniques, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The research informants consisted of three principals, three teachers, and three committee chairmen from three elementary schools who were purposively selected. The data were analysed through the stages of reduction, presentation, and triangulation using Miles and Huberman's models, and their validity was tested through triangulation of sources and techniques. **Results:** The results of the study show a transformation of the relationship between the school and the committee from an administrative to a collaborative pattern of interaction. Equal partnerships strengthen communication, participation-based promotion improves the school's reputation, and social solidarity strengthens community support. The synergy of these three aspects contributes to the formation of a positive and sustainable school's image. **Novelty:** This study makes a new contribution by affirming that school committee empowerment in the context of the archipelago region serves not only as an instrument of participation but also as a social strategy to build an image of community-based education through partnerships, digital promotion, and social solidarity.

INTRODUCTION

Basic education is the main foundation for the formation of quality human resources. At this level, the educational process is not only oriented towards mastering basic knowledge but also the formation of students' character, moral values, and social skills (Dewi and Alam, 2020). The success of educational implementation in elementary schools is greatly influenced by the synergy between schools, parents, and the community (Devisiana et al., 2024). One of the forums that bridges this relationship is the school committee, as stipulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 75 of 2016 concerning School Committees. School committees have a strategic role as representative institutions of the community that participate in improving the quality of educational services through consideration, support, supervision, and partnerships with schools (Ekawati et al., 2024).

However, the reality on the ground shows that the role of school committees is not fully optimised. Preliminary observations in several elementary schools in Salang District, Simeulue Regency, show that most school committees still function administratively and ceremonially, such as raising funds or attending annual meetings, without being actively involved in the planning and evaluation of school policies. This condition has an impact on weak communication and involvement between the school



and the community, which leads to a lack of a positive image of the school in the eyes of the public. A good school image reflects the quality of educational services and the level of public trust in the educational institution.

A school's image is not only determined by academic achievement but also by how the school is able to build harmonious relationships with stakeholders through effective communication, positive promotion, and solidarity actions with the community (Rahmat, 2021). In the Salang District, the main challenges are limited promotional media, weak parental participation, and the lack of a collaborative strategy between the school and the committee to strengthen the school's reputation. Nevertheless, there are positive indications in the form of mutual cooperation activities, joint meetings, and the installation of simple promotional media that show the potential for empowering school committees if they are managed in a more targeted and sustainable manner.

Previous studies (Suyati et al., 2025); (Lansing et al., 2023); (Shannon and O'Leary, 2020) show that effective school committee empowerment can increase community participation, strengthen transparency, and build public trust in schools. However, studies that specifically link school committee empowerment strategies to improving the image of elementary schools in the context of archipelago areas such as Simeulue are still limited. Thus, this research is important for exploring how school committee empowerment strategies can play a role in building a positive image of schools through partnerships, promotions, and stakeholder solidarity actions.

Therefore, this study aims to describe and analyse the school committee empowerment strategy for improving the image of elementary schools in Salang District, Simeulue Regency, focusing on three main aspects: (1) empowerment through increasing partnerships between schools and committees, (2) empowerment through school promotion activities, and (3) empowerment through solidarity actions with stakeholders. The results of this study are expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of participatory management in primary education, as well as provide practical recommendations for schools and local governments to strengthen the image of educational institutions through continuous collaboration between schools and communities.

Theoretical Framework

A. School Committee Empowerment Concept

In the context of education, empowerment is defined as a process of increasing the capacity, participation, and independence of educational actors in making decisions and acting productively for the progress of the institution (Agusta & Ngadimun, 2024). According to Fitriani (2020), the empowerment of school committees is a form of structured community participation in the school governance system that aims to strengthen the public accountability and transparency of education policies. The school committee is no longer just a symbolic institution, but a strategic partner of the school in the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating the Education program (Nurrozyan & Rustam, 2025).

The empowerment of effective school committees is characterised by an increase in the capacity of members, willingness to participate, and ability to perform social control functions over school policies (Ekawati et al., 2024). In this context, empowerment serves to expand the space for community participation to provide policy input, supervise service quality, and collectively support school activities. Thus, the empowerment of

school committees is oriented towards the creation of synergistic relationships between schools, parents, and the community that, in the long run, contribute to improving the quality and image of the school.

In Indonesia, the role of school committees is formally regulated through *Permendikbud Number 75 of 2016 concerning School Committees*, which affirms the four main functions of the committee: (1) a thinker, (2) a supporter, (3) a supervisor, and (4) a mediator between the school and the community. Through these four functions, the empowerment of school committees is an important part of the implementation of school-based management that emphasises the decentralisation of authority and public participation in the implementation of education (Hudodo et al., 2022).

B. School Image Concept

School image is the public's perception, impression, and view of the identity and quality of a school. Nurohman (2024) stated that the image of a school is formed from a combination of internal performance (such as the quality of learning, teacher professionalism, and the leadership of the principal) and external interaction (such as public communication, promotion, and community involvement). Schools with a positive image tend to be more trusted by the public, more in demand by prospective students, and easier to support from stakeholders (Hailat et al., 2021).

According to Sholeh (2023), the strategy to improve the image of educational institutions can be carried out through three main aspects: (1) effective communication with the public, (2) consistency of messages in promotion and publication, and (3) transparency and accountability in governance. Therefore, the image of the school is not only the result of academic achievements but also a reflection of public trust in the credibility and integrity of educational institutions.

In the context of elementary schools, a good image can strengthen parental trust, increase community participation, and build loyalty to schools (Nurohman, 2024). This shows that the image of the school is not only symbolic but also the main indicator of the success of community-based education management.

C. The Relationship Between School Committee Empowerment and School Image

The relationship between school committee empowerment and school image is direct and mutually reinforcing. An empowered school committee can be an effective communication mediator between schools and the community, mobilise social support, and represent public accountability (Syaifulloh et al., 2025). Through good empowerment, school committees can play an active role in school promotion, social solidarity activities, and strategic decision-making that impacts the institution's reputation.

Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020), affirm that the positive image of schools grows from high levels of community participation, especially when parents and school committees feel involved in the policy process. Thus, the stronger the partnership between the school and the committee, the greater the level of public trust in it. In contrast, weak communication and committee involvement often lead to a decline in the image of the school, because the public views the school as closed and not transparent. In this study, school committee empowerment is viewed through three strategic aspects:

1. Partnership is the involvement of the committee in the process of communication, planning, and evaluation of school programs
2. Promotion is the activity of the committee in introducing the school's achievements to the public
3. Solidarity is the collaboration of stakeholders to support social and educational activities in schools.

These three aspects contribute directly to the formation of a positive image of elementary schools in the Salang District.

27 Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical study and the results of previous research, the conceptual relationship in this study can be described as follows.

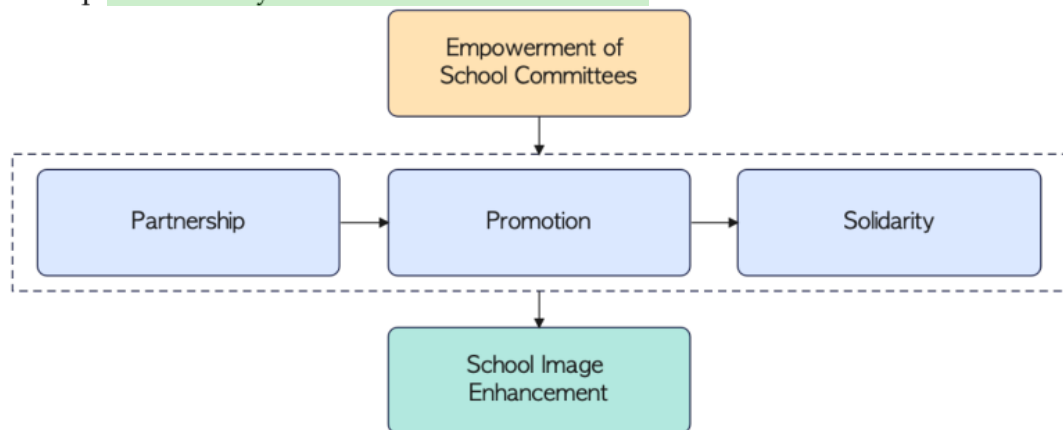


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows that the empowerment of school committees which is realised through increased partnerships, promotional activities, and solidarity actions with stakeholders, synergistically contributes to improving the image of elementary schools. This relationship is based on the principles of stakeholder engagement and community-based school management, where community participation is an important factor in realising effective, transparent, and public-trust educational governance.

RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Approach

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive field research method. This approach was chosen because the research aims to understand in depth the social phenomena related to the school committee's empowerment strategy for improving the image of elementary schools. According to Moleong (2017), qualitative research is oriented towards the meaning and interpretation of events that occur naturally, so that researchers play the role of the main instrument that interacts directly with data sources. This approach is relevant to research objectives that emphasise the exploration of the processes, strategies, and experiences of education actors in the field.

B. Location, Time, and Research Subject

This research was carried out in three elementary schools in Salang District, Simeulue Regency, which represent the characteristics of schools with large, medium, and small conditions, namely SD Negeri 1 Salang, SD Negeri 4 Salang, and SD Negeri 5 Salang. The

selection of locations was carried out purposively, considering that the three schools have different characteristics of the **5** social environment and the level of involvement of the school committee, so that it can provide a comprehensive picture of the variety of empowerment strategies implemented.

The research activities were carried out for three months, starting from 25 May 2025 to 25 July 2025 including the initial observation stage, the main data collection, and the verification of interview results and documentation.

The research subjects consisted of nine main informants who were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in school committee empowerment activities. The informants consisted of three principals, three school committee chairmen, and three representative teachers from each school. To maintain confidentiality and objectivity, each informant was assigned an identity code, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Informant Coding

Nu	Informant Code	Position	School Origin	Description of Participation in Research
1	AM	Teacher	Salang 1 Public Elementary School	Provide data related to communication and partnerships between teachers and school committees; Assessing the role of the committee is still a formality but helps communicate with parents.
2	NS	Teacher	Salang 4th State Elementary School	Describe the process of school promotion and creativity barriers in the publication of school activities.
3	MT	Teacher	Salang 5th State Elementary School	Explain the views on solidarity between teachers, principals, and committees that have not been consistently running.
4	HM	Principal	Salang 1 Public Elementary School	Provide a strategic view on the weak coordination of partnerships and the importance of committees as school policy partners.
5	CL	Principal	Salang 4th State Elementary School	Assessing that school promotion is still ceremonial and has not had a significant impact on the school's image.
6	HD	Principal	Salang 5th State Elementary School	Emphasizing the importance of solidarity actions between schools, committees, and communities as part of a participatory culture.
7	BT	Chair of the School Committee	Salang 1 Public Elementary School	He said that the committee has not been fully involved in decision-making, but is active in mutual cooperation and social support activities.
8	RD	Chair of the School Committee	Salang 4th State Elementary School	Provide input related to school promotion strategies that are still weak and the need for innovation based on community participation.
9	MY	Chair of the School Committee	Salang 5th State Elementary School	Provide input related to school promotion strategies that are still weak and the need for innovation based on community participation.

3. Data Collection Techniques

Research data were collected through three main techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation.

1. Observations were carried out directly in the school environment to obtain a real picture of partnership, promotion, and solidarity activities between the school and

the committee. These observations help researchers understand the social behaviours and dynamics of cooperation that occur in the field.

2. Documentation was conducted to obtain secondary data in the form of meeting minutes, school committee activity reports, photos of promotional activities, and communication archives between the school and the committee. This document serves to strengthen the observation and interview data as a form of source triangulation.

D. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out simultaneously with the data collection process using a model (Huberman, 2019) which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification.

The data reduction stage was carried out by sorting and selecting the results of the interviews, observations, and documents relevant to the three main focuses of the research: partnership, promotion, and solidarity. Data that were not directly related to the focus of the research were eliminated to ensure a more directed analysis.

The data presentation stage was carried out by displaying the results of the reduction in the form of tables, verbatim excerpts from interviews, and narrative descriptions that describe the relationships between concepts. This presentation helps researchers recognise the patterns, connections, and meanings behind the data.

The last stage, drawing conclusions and verification, is carried out repeatedly (iteratively) throughout the research process to ensure that the conclusions are sourced from field data. The initial conclusions obtained were then verified through comparisons between data sources (teachers, principals, committees) to test the consistency of the information.

22 Data Validity Test

The validity of the data in this study was maintained by using the principle of trustworthiness, as stated by Guba and Lincoln (1994), which includes four main criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These four principles are applied in an integrated manner during the process of collecting, analysing, and reporting research results so that the data obtained truly reflect real conditions in the field.

The credibility aspect was maintained by triangulating sources and techniques. The researcher obtained data through three main techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Any data obtained from one technique were compared with the results of another technique to ensure the consistency of the findings. For example, the teachers' statements (AM, NS, MT) regarding the weaknesses of the partnership are confirmed by the views of the principal (HM, CL, HD) as well as evidence from the school committee meeting documentation. This step helps ensure that the data being analysed are truly factual and not a single perception of one party. In addition, the researcher also conducts member checking, which is reconfirming the results of provisional interpretation to the informants so that there is no misunderstanding of the meaning of their statements. Thus, all information used in the analysis was clarified directly from the source.

The transferability aspect was maintained by providing a detailed description of the research context, including the location, characteristics of the school, and the social conditions of the community in Salang District, Simeulue Regency. Detailed descriptions



of the field situation, patterns of interaction between schools and committee²⁰ and forms of community promotion and solidarity activities allow readers to assess the extent to which the results of this study can be applied to similar contexts. The researcher presents the social and cultural background of the research area clearly so that the reader can understand the background of the phenomenon being studied in its entirety.

The dependability aspect is maintained through systematic research process documentation. The researcher recorded all stages of activities from planning, data collection, to analysis in the form of trail audits. All interview results, field notes, and photographs of activities were retained as evidence of the research process. Any revision³⁷ of interpretation or change in the focus of the analysis is also noted to show that the analysis was carried out in stages and was based on empirical data. Thus, the research process is transparent and can be traced back if an audit is conducted by another party. The confirmability aspect is maintained by emphasising that all research conclusions are based on field data and not the researcher's personal assumptions.

1 F. Research Ethics

This research was carried out by paying attention to the ethical principles of social and educational research, namely respecting the rights of informants, maintaining data confidentiality, and using information⁹ obtained only for academic purposes. Before the interview, all informants were given an explanation of the purpose of the research and asked for their informed consent. In addition, the identity of the informant is disguised in the report of the research results to ensure confidentiality and integrity of the scientific process.

1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study aims to describe the school committee empowerment strategy for³⁸ improving the image of elementary schools in the Salang District of Simeulue Regency. Based on the results of observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation reviews, three main focuses of the empowerment strategy were found: (1) empowerment and improvement of school and committee partnerships, (2) empowerment in improving the image of schools through promotion, and (3) solidarity actions with stakeholders². These three aspects are interrelated and form an interaction pattern that affects the school's image in the eyes of the public.

28 Empowerment and Enhancement of School and Committee Partnerships

The results of the study show that partnerships between schools and school committees in the Salang District are still dominated by formal and administrative relationship patterns, but have begun to shift towards more participatory partnerships. Teachers, principals, and committees agreed that this relationship needs to be strengthened so that the committee plays a truly strategic role as a strategic partner in the planning and implementation of school programs.

Table 2. Thematic Data Reduction School and Committee Partnerships

Nu	Informant Code	Key Statement	Reduction of Meaning	Theme
1	AM, NS, MT (Teacher)	"The partnership with the school committee is still weak, often just a formality, communication is poorly connected, and support is also minimal."	Communication and support of the committee have not been intensive; Partnerships tend to be formal	Formal and Passive Partnerships
2	HM, CL, HD (Principal)	"Partnership empowerment is still weak, communication is not smooth, support is limited, and often appears only in meetings."	Committee involvement has not been sustainable, collaboration has not been institutionalized	Limited Involvement in Decisions
3	BT, RD, MY (committee)	"The committee feels that partnerships with schools are still half-hearted, many decisions are one-sided, and communication is not always open."	The Committee is not yet considered an equal partner; There is still a top-down decision	Relationships Are Not Aligned
4	AM, NS, MT (Teacher)	"The committee facilitates communication with parents and the community and encourages participation in school activities."	The committee acts as a bridge of information	Early Participatory Partnerships
5	HM, CL, HD (Principal)	"Strategic partner committees in decision-making and liaisons with the community."	The strategic role of the committee is beginning to be recognized	Strategic Collaboration
6	BT, RD, MY (committee)	The committee began to actively channel the aspirations and participation of the community	The committee began to actively channel the aspirations and participation of the community	Aspirative and Driving Roles

The data in Table 2 show that partnerships between schools and committees are transitioning from administrative to collaborative relationships. The main obstacles lie in communication that is not routine and the perception of roles that remain hierarchical. However, the emergence of committee initiatives in social activities and public communication marked the beginning of a shift towards an equitable participatory partnership.

B. Empowerment in Improving School Image Through Promotion

School promotion is an important strategy for building a positive image in society. Based on the interview results, promotional activities in elementary schools in the Salang District are still simple and not strategically directed. However, some schools have started to introduce innovation through the use of social media.

Table 3. Reduction of School Promotion Thematic Data

Nu	Informant Code	Key Statement	Reduction of Meaning	Theme
1	AM, NS, MT (Teacher)	"School promotion is still monotonous, lacks new ideas, and often only becomes a ceremonial activity."	School promotion is not yet innovative and unplanned	Conventional and Ceremonial Promotions
2	HM, CL, HD (Principal)	"The promotion has not been directed, the follow-up is not serious, and the impact on the	Promotion has not had an impact on	Limitations of Promotional Strategies

Nu	Informant Code	Key Statement	Reduction of Meaning	Theme
3	BT, RD, MY (committee)	school's image has not been seen." "Promotional efforts have not been maximized, not greedy, and the results have not made the name of the school more known."	improving the school's image Public involvement in promotion has not been optimal	Low Promotional Participation
4	School Documentation	Banners, posters, and simple publications of student activities.	Promotion has already started with a traditional approach	Traditional Promotion as Initial Capital

School promotion is still carried out conventionally and has not become a priority in the school management. However, there is a new awareness of the need to develop digital-based promotions and involve school committees and the community. This change has the potential to improve the school's image if it is implemented consistently and collaboratively.

C. Solidarity Action with Stakeholders

Solidarity actions are tangible forms of social collaboration among schools, committees, and communities. The results of this study show that solidarity activities have begun to emerge, although their implementation is still not systematically structured.

Table 4. Thematic Data Reduction: Stakeholder Solidarity

Nu	Informant Code	Key Statement	Reduction of Meaning	Theme
1	AM, NS, MT (Teacher)	"Solidarity actions with stakeholders are still lacking because coordination and support are minimal."	Coordination between parties has not been well built	Unstructured Solidarity
2	HM, CL, HD (Principal)	"The solidarity action makes the school lighter because there is support from parents and the community."	Social support strengthens school activities	Functional Solidarity
3	BT, RD, MY (committee)	"We, the committee, have started to be actively involved since there was PP 75/2016 even in certain activities."	Increased committee involvement in social activities	Situational Solidarity
4	School Documentation	Photos of committee meetings, mutual cooperation, and school social activities	Tangible evidence of community participation in school activities	Positive Solidarity Practices

The social solidarity built in the schools of Salang District shows that community participation is getting stronger. Support in the form of energy, morals, and materials proves the existence of a sense of belonging in the school. Although it is still situational, joint social activities are the first step towards more sustainable solidarity and have an impact on the school's image.

D. Synthesis of Research Results

The three focuses of empowerment-partnership, promotion, and solidarity-have reflected mutually reinforcing relationships in efforts to build the image of elementary schools. Good partnerships facilitate coordination, effective promotion increases public trust, and social solidarity to strengthen public support.



Table 5. Synthesis of Data Reduction Results

Focus on Empowerment	Meaning of Reduction Results	Key Findings	Development Direction
Partnership	Communication and collaboration are still weak but starting to be participatory	School-committee relations move from formal to collaborative	Strengthening communication and active involvement of the committee
Promotion	Still traditional and not yet innovative	Digital promotion and publication of student achievements are still minimal	Development of creative and collaborative promotional strategies
Solidarity	Community support has grown but is not structured	Mutual cooperation is the basis of togetherness	Strengthening participatory culture and sustainable social action

The empowerment of school committees in Salang District shows a process of positive change from administrative relations to collaborative relationships. The three dimensions of empowerment (partnership, promotion, and solidarity) synergistically improve the image of elementary schools. To achieve sustainability, schools must strengthen communication, expand social collaboration, and develop promotion strategies based on community participation.

Discussion

The results of the study show that the school committee empowerment strategy has made an important contribution to building and strengthening the image of elementary schools in the Salang District. This empowerment is realised through three main dimensions: partnership, promotion, and solidarity. These three dimensions form a system that interacts with each other to increase public trust in schools as community-based educational institutions. The empowerment of school committees not only serves as a means of community involvement in school management but also becomes a strategic instrument for building harmonious social relations between schools and communities. Thus, the results of this study confirm that the image of elementary schools is formed not only through academic achievement but also through collaborative and participatory practices that reflect the openness and accountability of educational institutions.

In the partnership dimension, the results of the study show a shift in the pattern of relationships between schools and committees from administrative relationships to collaborative parallel partnerships. Teachers and principals revealed that communication with the committee so far is still formal, but there has been an increase in the committee's involvement in the planning and implementation of school programs. The school committee also shows a readiness to play a more active role if given a wider opportunity. This condition is in line with the findings of Arar and Nasra (2020), who affirmed that the success of school-based management is determined by equal involvement between schools and the community. Collaboration-oriented empowerment makes school committees not just an administrative entity but a strategic partner that plays a role in the process of planning, supervising, and evaluating educational programs. This also strengthens the theory of community empowerment proposed by Fikriyah et al. (2024), which emphasises the importance of shared leadership and capacity building in building active community participation in education. Thus, an equal partnership between the



school and the committee has direct implications for increasing social legitimacy and forming a positive image of primary schools.

The promotional dimension shows that elementary schools in the Salang District still rely on conventional promotional strategies such as banners, billboards, and the publication of school activities in a simple way. However, initiatives have begun to emerge from several schools to use social media as a means of public communication, although they have not been managed systematically. These results strengthen the view of Androniceanu (2021), who states that school promotion is not only aimed at introducing educational institutions to the public, but also as a means of public accountability that reflects transparency and information disclosure. The involvement of school committees in promotional activities can expand the reach of communication and strengthen public trust in educational institutions (Wahid et al. 2025). In the context of empowerment, the promotion carried out collaboratively shows that the school has tried to build a positive narrative through the active role of the community itself. Therefore, digital literacy training for teachers and committee members is important to support the transformation of promotion from an informative model to a participatory model based on technology and social communication methods.

The solidarity dimension shows that community support for school activities in the Salang District has begun to increase through involvement in mutual cooperation activities, fundraising, and other social activities. Although the implementation has not been structured in the annual agenda, community participation positively contributes to the sustainability of school programs and strengthens social relations between educated citizens. This finding is in line with the social capital theory proposed by Fenizia and Parrello (2025), which states that social trust and a sense of community are key elements in building a positive image of educational institutions. In the context of Simeulue's local culture, gotong royong activities have strong symbolic value as a form of local wisdom that fosters a sense of care and togetherness. The social solidarity built among schools, committees, and communities reflects the creation of emotional relationships that support the sustainability of community-based education (Sabila, 2024). Therefore, strengthening solidarity must be directed at forming a sustainable collaborative culture to increase the social carrying capacity of schools.

These three dimensions show close integration and interdependence in the process of forming a school's image. Good partnerships are the foundation for the creation of open communication and effective promotion of the school's reputation in the eyes of the public. Social solidarity strengthens trust and community involvement. This integration is in line with the community-based education management model that places cross-element collaboration at the core of education management (Komarudin et al., 2024). Within this framework, the school committee acts as a link between internal governance and the community's external perception, so that the image of the school is not only formed through promotional activities but is the result of continuous social interaction. The synergy between these three dimensions of empowerment indicates that a positive school image reflects participatory, communicative, and community-oriented educational practices.

Theoretically, this study expands the understanding of school committee empowerment as a part of participatory governance in the education system. These findings reinforce the idea that community empowerment cannot be separated from the social and cultural context in which educational institutions operate in. In archipelagic



areas such as Simeulue, community participation in education is influenced by cultural values and strong horizontal social relations. This enriches the empowerment theory proposed by Ari et al. (2024) by adding a contextual perspective that shows that collaboration based on local wisdom can be a source of social power in educational development. In practical terms, this study recommends strengthening formal partnership mechanisms between schools and committees, the active involvement of committees in school promotion strategies, and the establishment of social solidarity activities as a planned annual agenda. This recommendation is in line with the mandate of *Permendikbud Number 75 of 2016*, which places school committees as strategic partners in improving the quality of education and strengthening relationships between schools and the community.

However, this study had several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the research was conducted in a limited area, namely several elementary schools in the Salang District; therefore, the results of this study are contextual and cannot be generalised to other areas with different social and cultural characteristics. Second, the data obtained are qualitative and highly dependent on the perception of the informant; therefore, the interpretation emphasises depth of understanding rather than breadth of representation. Third, this study was conducted in a relatively short span of time; therefore, it has not been able to fully describe the dynamics of changes in committee empowerment practices longitudinally. Nevertheless, the validity of the data was maintained through the application of source triangulation techniques and verification of the interview results. Further research is suggested to expand the scope of the site, involve a mixed-methods approach, and conduct a long-term analysis to more fully describe the evolution of school committee empowerment practices in different social contexts.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that the school committee empowerment strategy in the Salang District has changed from an administrative pattern to a participatory pattern based on collaboration. This transformation positively impacts the image of elementary schools because it encourages community involvement, strengthens social communication, and builds public trust. By integrating partnerships, promotions, and solidarity on an ongoing basis, primary schools can build an educational ecosystem that focuses not only on academic outcomes but also on strengthening people's social and cultural values. Thus, the positive image of the school becomes a reflection of the effectiveness of social empowerment which is realised through the active participation of all components of the educational community.

1 CONCLUSION

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Fundamental Finding: This study shows that the empowerment of school committees plays a strategic role in building the image of elementary schools in the Salang District, Simeulue Regency. The three main dimensions are partnership, promotion, and solidarity, which interact synergistically to strengthen the relationship between schools and the community. Aligned partnerships, participatory promotions, and strong social solidarity reflect collaborative education governance that directly increases public trust in schools. Implications: Theoretically, the results of this study strengthen the concept of participatory governance in primary education, emphasizing that collaboration between schools and communities is essential for sustainable school development. Practically, the findings reinforce the implementation of the Regulation of the Minister of Education and



Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 75 of 2016 concerning School Committees, which mandates that committees serve as strategic partners of schools in providing considerations, support, supervision, and mediation in educational management. Strengthening this policy framework ensures that empowerment efforts – such as regular communication mechanisms, digital-based promotion management, and community-oriented social programs are aligned with national education governance standards. Therefore, this study provides practical guidance for schools and local governments to integrate committee empowerment within the existing policy structure to enhance the positive image and accountability of educational institutions. **Future Research:** Subsequent research is suggested to expand the study area, use a mixed-methods approach, and longitudinally trace the impact of committee empowerment on school imagery in different social and cultural contexts, including the influence of principals' leadership and the use of digital technology.

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