

# Beyond the Ledger: Reconciling Financial Accountability and School Well-being in Public Education

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## Abstract:

The implementation of school well-being requires adequate financial support, but is often hampered by the complexity of budget management, limited specific funding allocations, and difficulties in aligning regulatory compliance with student welfare priorities. This study aims to analyze financial management to support school well-being, focusing on planning, organization, implementation, and supervision, as well as its relationship to the School Operational Assistance (BOS) mechanism, public school governance, and financial accountability. The research approach used a case study design, with data collection through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, while data analysis was conducted interactively through reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results show that participatory, data-driven financial planning improves allocation accuracy, organization is supported by task allocation and the BOS Management Team, implementation promotes administrative transparency, and supervision strengthens financial accountability through monitoring, internal audits, and school committee involvement. The implications of this research are the development of an operational model for financial management that integrates the BOS mechanism, public school governance principles, and financial accountability practices as a reference for policymakers and school administrators.

**Keywords:** *Financial Management, School Well-Being, Data-Based Planning, Budget Transparency*

## Abstrak:

Implementasi school well-being memerlukan dukungan finansial yang memadai, namun sering terhambat oleh kompleksitas pengelolaan anggaran, keterbatasan alokasi dana spesifik, serta kesulitan dalam menyelaraskan kepatuhan regulasi dengan prioritas kesejahteraan siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis manajemen pembiayaan untuk mendukung school well-being dengan fokus pada perencanaan, pengorganisasian, pelaksanaan, dan pengawasan, serta keterkaitannya dengan mekanisme Bantuan Operasional Sekolah (BOS), tata kelola sekolah negeri, dan pertanggungjawaban keuangan. Pendekatan penelitian menggunakan desain studi kasus dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi. Informan dipilih secara purposive sampling, sedangkan analisis data dilakukan secara interaktif melalui reduksi, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perencanaan pembiayaan yang partisipatif berbasis data meningkatkan ketepatan alokasi, pengorganisasian didukung oleh pembagian tugas dan Tim Manajemen BOS, pelaksanaan menerapkan transparansi administrasi, dan

pengawasan memperkuat akuntabilitas keuangan melalui monitoring, audit internal, dan pelibatan komite sekolah. Implikasi penelitian ini menghasilkan model operasional manajemen pembiayaan yang mengintegrasikan mekanisme BOS, prinsip tata kelola sekolah negeri, dan praktik akuntabilitas keuangan sebagai rujukan bagi pengambil kebijakan dan pengelola sekolah.

**Kunci:** *Manajemen Pembiayaan, School Well-Being, Perencanaan Berbasis Data, Transparansi Anggaran*

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## INTRODUCTION

Quality education is not only oriented towards academic achievement. Still, it must also foster an ecosystem that supports holistic student welfare (school well-being) (Wulandari & Widodo, 2026; Zhuang & Liu, 2022). In the modern educational paradigm, schools are required to be safe, comfortable, and enjoyable environments that meet students' basic needs, including aspects of having (school conditions), loving (social relationships), being (self-fulfillment), and health (Porter et al., 2024). A positive school climate and adequate support facilities are significantly correlated with increased academic achievement and students' subjective well-being (Wong et al., 2024). However, to fully grasp the dimensions of school well-being, especially the having aspect related to physical facilities and environmental comfort, strong financial management support is needed, as the quality of educational services is highly dependent on the availability and effective management of financial resources.

The main challenge facing many educational institutions today is the gap between the ever-increasing need for funding and the limited available funding allocation (Cheslock & Riggs, 2023; Raihan et al., 2025). Inefficient management of educational funding often hinders the fulfillment of facility and infrastructure standards, ultimately degrading school well-being (Adeoye et al., 2024). Dzigbede et al. (2023) emphasized that effectiveness and efficiency in budget management are vital keys for schools to continue providing excellent services amidst post-pandemic fiscal constraints. Hoover (2024) highlighted that disparities in investment in school infrastructure directly affect student learning outcomes and mental health, underscoring the urgency of budgeting strategies that prioritize student well-being.

Efforts to achieve quality education at SMP Negeri 2 Pematang are inseparable from providing a conducive, safe, and enjoyable learning environment for all school members. Achieving ideal school well-being, encompassing physical aspects, harmonious social relationships, student self-fulfillment, and mental health, is highly dependent on effective and accountable financial management. The primary challenge facing schools is the complexity of harmonizing their dynamic program needs with binding funding regulations. As a public school, the primary funding source, the School Operational Assistance (*Bantuan Operasional Sekolah*), has specific technical guidelines and strict allocation rules. Often, the real needs to support the overall dimension of student well-being do not have an explicit budget line in the government's standard budget structure.

The primary focus of school well-being-focused financial management lies in allocating resources for mental health and facilities that support student well-

being. As Johnson et al. (2025) noted, schools with high levels of well-being investment are typically supported by a strong foundation of caring and the ability to seek alternative funding sources outside the official budget. Pollard & Sharkey (2025) emphasize the importance of coordinating resources and policy frameworks for equitable and sustainable staffing. Furthermore, implementation factors such as stakeholder engagement, communication, and organizational priorities significantly influence the success of school wellness programs. This means that budgeting strategies must be accompanied by concrete implementation plans for meaningful allocations (Richter et al., 2022). Similarly, Kirnan et al. (2025) emphasized that financial support for educational programs is effective in improving students' mental literacy. This means that budgeting strategies and program priorities are key determinants of the success of school well-being services. Studies on financial management in Indonesia tend to highlight the urgency of governance, transparency, and participation. Khatri et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of the managerial aspects of school well-being financing, which aligns with field findings by King and Mestry (2023), that the active involvement of principals, teachers, and committees in budget oversight can ensure more targeted allocation of well-being activities.

Although previous studies have emphasized the importance of allocating resources to mental health services and student support facilities, most remain at the conceptual or policy level and are largely derived from Western contexts. Empirical evidence on how financing governance shapes school well-being outcomes in Indonesian secondary schools remains limited. This gap indicates the absence of an integrative framework that connects the full cycle of financial management with multidimensional indicators of school well-being. Responding to this limitation, this study introduces a novel perspective by positioning financing management not merely as an administrative function, but as a strategic instrument that directly influences the realization of school well-being. Through an in-depth case study at SMP Negeri 2 Pematang, the research seeks to empirically map the linkage between planning, allocation, implementation, and accountability processes and their implications for student well-being outcomes.

This study is grounded in the assumption that effective, transparent, and adaptive financial management is a determining factor in creating a safe, supportive, and sustainable school ecosystem, particularly within the regulatory constraints of the School Operational Assistance (BOS) scheme. The rigidity of funding guidelines, combined with increasing demands for holistic student welfare, requires managerial innovation to bridge compliance obligations and contextual school needs. Therefore, the objective of this research is to analyze how financing strategies are formulated and implemented to accommodate well-being priorities while remaining aligned with government regulations. The contribution of this study lies in offering an empirical model that integrates regulatory compliance, participatory governance, and well-being-oriented budgeting, thereby enriching the discourse on educational financial management and providing practical recommendations for policymakers and school leaders seeking to optimize limited resources for holistic student development.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of financial management in the implementation of school well-being. This approach was chosen because the researchers wanted to explore the meaning, process, and dynamics of the educational financial management in a contextually and naturally situated school environment. The main focus of the research is on how management functions, from planning, organizing, implementing, and monitoring, are applied to support the four dimensions of school well-being (having, loving, being, and health). The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Pemalang, located at Jl. Pemuda No. 34 Mulyoharjo, Pemalang District, Pemalang Regency, Central Java. This location was chosen because the school has implemented programs relevant to school well-being, but faces complex funding challenges. The research stages include pre-field activities, fieldwork, and data analysis.

The research subjects or informants were selected using purposive sampling, namely those with direct involvement and mastery of information related to the research focus. Key informants include: (1) The Principal as the policy maker and person responsible for financial management, (2) Teachers involved in the planning/implementation of the school's well-being program, and (3) Educational staff (treasurer/administrator) who handle financial administration. Supporting informants include students and school committee representatives who provide stakeholder perspectives. To maintain the validity and ethics of the research, the researcher followed official licensing procedures, including processing the institutional cover letter, obtaining permission from the Pemalang Regency Education Office, and securing the school's agreement. The principle of confidentiality was applied by disguising the identities of informants when necessary and ensuring that the data obtained was used solely for academic purposes.

In this qualitative research, the primary instrument is the researcher themselves. They act as planners, data collectors, analysts, interpreters, and ultimately, reporters of the research results. The researcher's role as the primary instrument cannot be replaced by any other tool, as only humans can flexibly engage with complex social realities, understand the meaning behind financial management phenomena, and examine the psychological well-being of school residents.

Data collection techniques in this study included in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies to gain a comprehensive understanding of school well-being-based financing management at SMP Negeri 2 Pemalang. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, including the Principal and Treasurer, to explore budgeting policies, as well as with teachers, committees, and students to assess their impact on the dimensions of having, loving, being, and health. The data were strengthened by direct observation of the condition of physical facilities and school social dynamics, as well as by a review of supporting documents such as the School Work Plan and Budget, the General Cash Book, and

accountability reports, to ensure the validity of data between budget planning and the implementation of school welfare programs. The interview guideline, which was compiled based on the theoretical framework of financing management and the dimensions of school well-being, is presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Interview Guidelines for School Well-Being Financing Management**

Sub Focus	Components/ Aspects	Indicator
Planning	Identification of Needs and Budgeting	Analysis of the need for facilities (having), social activities (loving), and health (health).
		Preparation of School Work Plan and Budget that prioritizes well-being programs.
Organizing	Division of Tasks and Resources	Involvement of school residents in formulating the budget.
		Explanation of the authority and responsibilities of the fund management team.
		Allocation of human resources according to competency for welfare programs.
Actuating	Realization and Transparency	Coordination mechanism between work units.
		Accuracy of use of funds for physical and non-physical programs.
		Transparency of budget disbursement and spending.
Controlling	Evaluation and Follow-up	The impact of financing on student comfort and motivation.
		Routine monitoring mechanism for the use of funds.
		Accountable accountability reporting.
		Follow up on evaluation results for improvements in the next period.

Source: (Zaini, 2025; Annur et al., 2025; Gusnardi et al., 2021)

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), which proceeds cyclically through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The condensation process involves sorting and simplifying field data relevant to the functions of financial management and school well-being indicators, which are then presented in a systematic narrative or matrix to facilitate understanding of managerial patterns. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verification to formulate credible findings on the effectiveness of financial management in creating a prosperous school environment, with the validity of the researcher's interpretation retested through consistent evidence throughout the research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### School Well-Being Financing Planning

The financial planning function at SMP Negeri 2 Pematang Liris prioritizes the use of valid data to identify the school's priority needs. This process involves an in-depth analysis of the school's actual conditions to ensure the budget is allocated to programs that support the well-being of the school community. Key informant views on this planning are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. Informants' Views on School Well-Being Financing Planning**

Informant	Statement
Principal (KS, Interview, 2025)	"Initial data collection was conducted through surveys, SWOT analysis, and Education Reports to compile accurate RKJM and RKAS."
Teachers (G, Interview, 2025)	"We use the Education Report to identify indicators of a climate of security and diversity that need to be improved through the budget."
Admin Staff (TU, Interview, 2025)	"Data-Based Planning serves as a reference to ensure the budget is on target to solve student problems."
Committee (KM, Interview, 2025)	"The joint meeting was held to gather aspirations regarding student facilities and comfort."

The data demonstrates a shared perspective among informants regarding the importance of data as the primary basis for budget planning. Principals emphasized the systematic nature of SWOT and resource analysis. At the same time, teachers and education personnel highlighted the use of the Education Report Card to ensure the budget impacts a positive school climate. The Committee's support in addressing infrastructure aspirations demonstrates a collaborative ecosystem in formulating well-being-oriented financing.

Field observations and documentation supported the interview results. Based on the documentation study, the SMP Negeri 2 Pemalang Education Report was identified as the primary basis for preparing the Medium-Term Work Plan, School Work Plan, and Budget. The School Work Plan and Budget document shows specific budget allocations for improving the school climate, including sanitation facilities and student activity programs. Meanwhile, observations during budget preparation meetings (Teacher Council and Committee Meetings) indicate an active dialectical process. Meeting participants were seen reviewing school profile data and comparing it with the actual condition of infrastructure before determining the budget amount. This confirms that planning is not based solely on assumptions but on concrete data.

### Organizing School Well-Being Financing

The organizational process reflects not only administrative compliance but also a strategic effort to align financial governance with well-being priorities. The principal establishes a hierarchical yet participatory structure that categorizes responsibilities into environmental, psychological, and learning domains. At the same time, teachers and administrative staff operationalize these responsibilities through formal decisions and cross-unit coordination mechanisms. Observations indicate that fund disbursement procedures involve verification and coordination between activity heads and the school treasurer, indicating that organizational principles in financial management are systematically implemented to prevent overlap, ensure transparency, and support the effective implementation of well-being programs.

**Table 3. Informants' Views on Organizing School Well-Being Financing**

Informant	Statement
Principal (KS, Interview, 2025)	"The organizational structure is formed with a collaborative hierarchy, dividing work units into environmental, psychological, and learning areas."
Teachers (G, Interview, 2025)	"The importance of a Task Distribution Decree is so that each person responsible for the program knows the limits of their financial authority."
Admin Staff (TU, Interview, 2025)	"Cross-unit coordination is carried out for large programs, supported by administrative clarity."

Table 3 indicates that an organization is not only administrative but also strategic. The principal establishes a well-being-based structure, while teachers and education personnel operationalize it through decrees and cross-unit collaboration to avoid overlapping tasks.

This finding is supported by physical evidence, including a School Organizational Structure Document clearly displayed in the administration room and the teachers' lounge. Within this structure, the School Development Team and the school's operational support management team are visible, each with a clear line of coordination. A documentary study of the Principal's Decree on the Division of Duties between Teachers and Education Personnel reveals specific task details for activity management and financial reporting. Observations of daily activities demonstrate a fluid yet structured coordination mechanism. The school treasurer is seen verifying files with the head of the activity unit before funds are disbursed, indicating that the organizational principle ("who does what") in financial management is being carried out in accordance with the procedures stipulated in the Principal's Decree.

### Implementation of School Well-Being Financing

The implementation phase is the actualization of the planned budget to realize the School Well-Being program. The primary focus at this stage is on the accuracy of fund use, transparency, and efficiency. A summary of interviews related to implementation is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Informants' Views on the Implementation of School Well-Being Financing**

Informant	Statement
Principal (KS, Interview, 2025)	"Budget implementation must be accompanied by complete and transparent physical and administrative evidence."
Teachers (G, Interview, 2025)	"The funds are used for activities that have a direct impact on students, such as class outings and improvements to the school garden."
Admin Staff (TU, Interview, 2025)	"The implementation of activities is monitored so that the benefits are commensurate with the costs incurred (cost-benefit)."

Table 4 shows that funding is implemented in line with the principles of priority and efficiency. The principal ensures accountability through documentation and audits. At the same time, teachers and the committee focus on cost-benefit to ensure that every dollar spent directly impacts the well-being of the school community.

These interview data align with observations of the school's physical environment. Funds are evident in facilities that support well-being, such as comfortable reading corners, clean, well-maintained student restrooms, and a beautiful school garden. Furthermore, observations of student activities indicate adequate funding for extracurricular activities. From an administrative perspective, documentation studies of the General Cash Book and Accountability Report demonstrate orderly transaction recording. Valid receipts and expenditure notes support every expenditure. Transparency is also demonstrated by the presence of information boards documenting the use of BOS funds installed in public areas of the school, allowing the school community to monitor cash flow transparently.

### School Well-Being Financing Monitoring

The oversight function ensures that funds are used in accordance with the plan and that there are no irregularities. Oversight is conducted internally and externally, based on reported data and field facts. Table 5 presents informants' views on this aspect.

**Table 5. Informants' Views on Supervision of School Well-Being Financing**

Informant	Statement
Principal (KS, Interview, 2025)	"We conduct variance analysis between plans and actuals, as well as regular internal audits."
Teachers (G, Interview, 2025)	"Program evaluation is carried out at the end of each activity through reflection meetings and student satisfaction surveys."
Admin Staff (TU, Interview, 2025)	"Preparation of financial report documents is carried out routinely to facilitate the audit/monitoring process."
Committee (KM, Interview, 2025)	"The committee receives regular reports and provides input if there are programs that are less than optimal."

Table 5 shows that the oversight function serves as a financial quality assurance mechanism. The principal uses technical financial instruments (variance analysis), teachers use participatory instruments (reflection/questionnaires), and the Committee conducts external oversight. This synergy ensures transparent financing of School Well-Being and continuous improvement.

To validate the interview results, a documentation study was conducted on the Minutes of the Monthly Evaluation Meeting. This document records findings on budget absorption constraints and the agreed-upon solutions. Also found was an archive of Monitoring and Evaluation Reports containing notes on recommendations for improvements for the next budget period. The principal used budget realization data to reprimand or praise the team's performance. Furthermore, visits by school supervisors or auditors recorded in the Guidance Guest Book provide physical evidence of an external control mechanism in place at SMP Negeri 2 Pemalang.



## Discussion

Field findings at SMP Negeri 2 Pematang Liris indicate that participatory, data-driven budget planning, using the Education Report and SWOT analysis, successfully improved the accuracy of fund allocation for school well-being programs. Theoretically, this empirical reality confirms that evidence-based budget planning (data-driven planning) is crucial for creating efficiency and accountability. This aligns with Putra et al. (2025), who found that the Identify–Reflect–Fix model in the School Budget Work Plan improves program focus, and with Amalia et al. (2025), who emphasized the role of the Education Report in strengthening transparency and stakeholder participation.

Lai et al. (2025) showed that a data-driven discussion format improves teachers' ability to interpret data and make more informed and focused program decisions. Mugarura et al. (2025) showed that participatory implementation and monitoring of school budgets positively impacted academic outcomes and stakeholder participation, confirming that the involvement of various parties (teachers, parents, and the community) in budget preparation and oversight can improve the effectiveness of resource allocation. Furthermore, Hadi et al. (2022) developed a valid instrument to evaluate teacher involvement in school budget planning at the elementary school level. They found that active teacher involvement correlated with the quality of school financial planning.

The organization of School Well-Being funding at SMP Negeri 2 Pematang Liris relies on clear task and authority divisions and a structured coordination mechanism. This is achieved by establishing specific task areas (environmental, psychological, and learning) in accordance with the Principal's Decree, and by involving the School Development Team and the School Operational Assistance Management Team in administrative verification. Furthermore, the active participation of the Committee and the Teachers' Council in allocation deliberations ensures accountability for budget realization across the dimensions of having, loving, being, and health. These empirical findings validate three recent theoretical perspectives.

The existence of the School Operational Assistance Management Team and a tiered verification mechanism has been proven effective in increasing regulatory compliance and transparency in spending (Putra & Suryanawa, 2022). The work-unit-based approach implemented by the school aligns with Rafsanjani et al. (2025), who found that a specific organizational structure improves operational efficiency and minimizes overlapping responsibilities. The participatory model, combined with transparent reporting, as emphasized by Jones et al. (2025), is key to strengthening stakeholder trust and the sustainability of school welfare programs.

The implementation of School Well-Being funding at SMP Negeri 2 Pematang Liris demonstrates that budget realization relies on accurate utilization, administrative transparency, and cost efficiency. Strong indications are evident in the orderly recording of the General Cash Book and Accountability Letter, transparency through the School Operational Assistance information board, and the physical manifestation of the program that supports the having-loving-being-health dimension (such as reading corners and sanitation).

The School Well-Being funding oversight mechanism at SMP Negeri 2 Pematang functions effectively as a quality assurance instrument that bridges planning (School Budget Work Plan/Medium-Term Work Plan) with field implementation. Through the implementation of variance analysis, internal audits, and participatory engagement (teacher reflection, student surveys, committees), the school successfully created transparency and continuous improvement in the dimensions of having, loving, being, and health. This structured monitoring and evaluation practice empirically confirms the findings of Azizah et al. (2023), which show that formalized oversight is positively correlated with greater transparency and accountability in the use of education funds.

Similarly, the central role of the principal and treasurer in overseeing routine reports and internal controls supports. Ibrahim et al. (2024) propose that financial leadership is significant for maintaining the quality of school services. Dwangu & Mahlangu (2021) demonstrated a strong relationship between formalized oversight and increased transparency/accountability of education funding. Similarly, the central role of the principal and treasurer in overseeing routine reporting and internal controls validates the proposition that financial leadership underpins school service quality. Principal leadership affirms that sustainable school improvement depends on leadership capable of managing resources (including financial) and facilitating evaluative routines that support continuous improvement (Karakose et al., 2024). A study by Swärd & Ramberg (2026) demonstrated how equity-focused funding strategies and the evaluation of fund allocations can strengthen the impact of resources on student outcomes, which is relevant to the monitoring and evaluation approach at SMP Negeri 2 Pematang, which links budget allocation to student well-being.

This study has limitations that need to be addressed, as they may affect the results and the generalizability of the findings. This study used a qualitative single-case design at SMP Negeri 2 Pematang. Hence, the findings are contextual and cannot be generalized to schools with different characteristics. Furthermore, the relatively limited research timeframe may not fully capture the long-term dynamics of financing management and its impact on school well-being. Therefore, the results of this study are best understood as in-depth, with limited transferability depending on the context.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study retain theoretical and practical relevance, enriching the study of school financial management by integrating the functions of planning, organizing, implementing, and monitoring, with a focus on improving school welfare. In practice, the research findings can serve as a reference for schools to optimize data-based budget planning and strengthen accountability in fund management. For further research, it is recommended to conduct studies at more than one school (multi-site), use a mixed-methods approach, and extend the duration of the study to obtain a more comprehensive picture and enable stronger generalizations.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the case study at SMP Negeri 2 Pematang, it can be concluded that the financial management function, from planning, organizing, implementing, to monitoring, has been carried out systematically and in an integrated manner to support the dimensions of school well-being (having, loving, being, and healthy). This cycle begins with data-driven planning that uses the Education Report Card and program evaluation to ensure alignment with the school's real needs. Next, the organization is strengthened through the management team's legal division of tasks, while budget implementation prioritizes transparency and accountability. This series is complemented by an internal monitoring mechanism and documented reporting, which enable continuous improvement. The synergy of these four functions has been proven to significantly improve learning facilities, foster a conducive school climate, and enhance students' overall well-being.

In practice, this study offers a structured, adaptable operational model for managing financial resources in other schools. These findings can serve as a strategic reference for principals and management teams in developing participatory and accountable budgets. However, this study is limited by its single-case design, which reduces the generalizability of the findings, and by its duration, which does not capture long-term impacts. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the scope through comparative studies, employ a mixed-methods approach, and quantitatively assess the influence of financial management on student welfare and learning outcomes, thereby enriching the literature on educational management.

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