

INSTITUTIONALIZING COLLABORATION: COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE TO ADDRESS CHILD PROTECTION POLICY FRAGMENTATION IN BONDOWOSO REGENCY

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Abstract

This study diagnoses the systemic failure of institutionalization in child protection policies in Bondowoso Regency and formulates a strategic collaborative governance model to address policy fragmentation. Employing a descriptive qualitative case study, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with DINSOS P3AKB, Edellweis NGO, and the Children's Forum. Empirical findings reveal that collaboration remains trapped in a 'dualism of systems,' where reactive and ad-hoc informal networks dominate over stagnant formal hierarchies, leading to chronic data fragmentation and overlapping roles. To resolve this, the study proposes an 'Institutionalized System-Based Collaborative Governance Model' centered on four integrated pillars: (1) strengthening formal collaboration forums, (2) synchronizing digital data systems, (3) codifying joint Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and (4) enhancing cross-sectoral resource capacity. This model transforms fragile interpersonal coordination into a resilient institutional framework, offering a transferable solution for local governments facing similar administrative fragmentation.

Keywords: Collaborative Governance, Child Protection, Policy Fragmentation, Institutionalization, Dualism of Systems.

1. Introduction

Children are invaluable assets to a nation's future; thus, their protection is a fundamental aspect of public policy. They require a safe and conducive environment to grow and develop optimally. Effective public policy ensures the fulfillment of children's basic rights, including the rights to education, health, and, most importantly, protection from all forms of violence (Fadillah et al., 2025; Herbowo, 2025). The fulfillment of these basic rights is a state responsibility. Without robust protection policies and effective implementation, children remain highly vulnerable to various threats that could hinder their development.

One of the most significant threats is violence against children. The World Health Organization (W.H.O., 2020) defines violence against children as any form of physical, emotional, or sexual violence, exploitation, or neglect that may result in harm or disruption to the child's health, development, or dignity. Data from various regions indicate cases of physical, psychological, and sexual violence against children (Prastini, 2024)(Ngai et al., 2023; Ali et al., 2024). This condition demands that the government not only formulate regulations but also implement these policies effectively on the ground to address such issues.

Despite a strong legal framework and institutional commitment, child protection efforts in Bondowoso Regency still face challenges regarding coordination effectiveness and policy



fragmentation. Data shows that the number of violence cases against children in Bondowoso remains significant, recording 64 cases in 2022. This high figure indicates that existing prevention and case management mechanisms have not operated optimally or in an integrated manner.

Empirically, this research identifies a deeper underlying governance issue. Stakeholder collaboration is primarily reactive and ad-hoc, relying heavily on informal (personal) networks. This phenomenon creates a critical system dualism: rapid responses to emergency cases occur through personal contacts or WhatsApp groups. At the same time, formal forums (such as coordination meetings or task forces) remain rigid and ceremonial, failing to build institutional trust or a stable shared understanding. This situation, characterized by data fragmentation and overlapping roles, causes child protection policies to fail in becoming truly institutionalized. This failure, a hallmark of ineffective collaborative governance, is the primary justification for this study's decision to analyze the problem through the lens of Ansell & Gash (2008) rather than traditional policy implementation approaches.

Problems in implementing child protection policies are not unique to Bondowoso. Studies in other locations, such as Pontianak City, also reveal that policy execution has not been optimal due to a lack of socialization and coordination among relevant agencies (Puspitasari, 2017). This is further supported by other findings identifying limited facilities and competent human resources as major constraints (Bestary et al., 2022). These various findings indicate that although regulations exist, effective implementation is difficult to achieve without strong communication and cooperation among stakeholders (Nuriawati et al., 2024).

To address these complex and multi-sectoral implementation challenges, collaborative efforts are essential. Child protection policies cannot be implemented effectively by the local government alone. Active involvement from various stakeholders, including Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), is required (Yusup et al., 2025), as they often serve as critical partners in advocacy, empowerment, and monitoring government performance. An approach that emphasizes cooperation between public and private stakeholders in formal, deliberative forums to create or implement public policy is known as Collaborative Governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

To analyze these complex multi-actor collaborative dynamics, this research adopts the Collaborative Governance theoretical framework. This theory emphasizes the importance of cooperation among various stakeholders to achieve common goals in solving public problems. In the context of public administration, collaborative governance is understood as a shift away from a monopolistic state management paradigm toward a governance model that involves non-governmental actors, such as the private sector and civil society organizations. The success of local development policies is heavily reliant on the quality of the collaboration process between government and non-government actors, as demonstrated in the development of religious tourism, where multi-stakeholder synergy is essential (Putri et al., 2024).

Collaborative governance is a collective decision-making process involving various public and private stakeholders in formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative forums aimed at creating or implementing public policy (Ansell & Gash, 2008). This framework allows various parties to share resources, information, and expertise to create policies that are more effective and responsive to field-level needs. In the context of child protection, this approach becomes highly



relevant because the success of the policy depends not only on a single government agency but also on synergy with NGOs, law enforcement agencies, and the community.

Several key elements are required for collaborative governance to operate effectively, including face-to-face dialogue, trust building, commitment to the process, and the achievement of shared understanding. Therefore, this research will use these key elements as an analytical lens to dissect existing forms of collaboration in Bondowoso Regency, identify their barriers, and ultimately formulate an ideal collaboration model that institutionalizes stakeholder synergy more effectively. Effective policy implementation requires more than just formal structures; it demands a synergy within the collaborative governance regime where system contexts and collaborative dynamics work in tandem to overcome administrative hurdles (Annisa & Sampurna, 2024)

Various previous studies have analyzed the implementation of child protection policies. Most of these studies utilized qualitative methods to evaluate policy execution by various actors (Rohayati & Kartini, 2019; Sahid et al., 2025). However, those studies tended to employ different classical theories of policy implementation, such as those by Van Meter & Van Horn, Mazmanian & Sabatier, and Merilee Grindle. There is still limited research that specifically employs the Collaborative Governance conceptual framework by Ansell and Gash to understand how multi-actor collaboration can be optimized. This study seeks to fill that gap by analyzing collaboration models as a strategy for policy optimization in Bondowoso Regency.

Based on the aforementioned description and research gap, this study focuses on an in-depth analysis of stakeholder collaboration patterns in Bondowoso Regency using the Collaborative Governance framework. This research aims to answer two primary questions: (1) to analyze the current form of stakeholder collaboration in the implementation of child protection policies in Bondowoso Regency; and (2) to formulate recommendations for an ideal collaboration model that is more effective in overcoming existing barriers in the region.

Through an analysis of the dynamics among key actors—the Local Government (DINSOS P3AKB), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Social Rehabilitation Assistants, and the Children's Forum—this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution by applying Collaborative Governance theory in the context of local-level child protection policies in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study aims to make a practical contribution in offering strategic model recommendations to strengthen coordination and enhance the effectiveness of child protection policy implementation in Bondowoso Regency.

Child protection policies have become a global priority, yet their implementation often remains fragmented across different jurisdictions. Studies in various contexts, such as the Republic of Korea, highlight that even with dedicated child-friendly city policies, structural coordination remains a persistent challenge (Nam & Nam, 2018). While the legal framework in Indonesia is robust, the gap between policy design and field-level execution suggests that traditional top-down approaches are increasingly insufficient in addressing the complexity of child-related issues. Violence against children remains a systemic issue in Indonesia that demands a multisectoral response. Prastini (2024) emphasizes that child protection efforts must be supported by a strong legal and social infrastructure to bridge the gap between reported cases and effective legal or psychological interventions.



In a broader academic context, the collaborative challenges in Bondowoso reflect a global phenomenon where institutional design often struggles to keep pace with operational needs. Compared to collaborative models in more digitally advanced or centralized administrative cultures, such as those analyzed by Wang & Ran (2023) regarding the entanglements of network governance, the Bondowoso case highlights a unique and heavy dependency on interpersonal trust to bypass bureaucratic bottlenecks. While international literature frequently emphasizes resource sharing as the primary driver of success, this study identifies that in developing local administrations, 'system institutionalization' is the more critical barrier. This positioning aligns with recent discourse suggesting that informal networks in local governance act as a double-edged sword—providing necessary agility in the short term but hindering systemic stability and accountability in the long term if not formally integrated.

The evolution of child protection policies necessitates a transition from traditional bureaucratic hierarchies toward more resilient collaborative public management. As argued by O'Leary and Vij (2020), contemporary governance requires a strategic shift that moves beyond formal mandates to embrace a more dynamic networking approach. This research contributes to this global discourse by examining how local governments in developing contexts navigate the tensions between formal institutional rigidities and the necessity for collaborative agility. In contemporary urban governance, persistent policy challenges often arise not from a regulatory vacuum, but from fragmented institutional arrangements and limited cross-sectoral integration between government and non-state actors (Lestari et al., 2026).

This research extends the existing theory beyond descriptive analysis by introducing the concept of Institutionalization as Systemic Redesign. It argues that in developing administrative contexts like Bondowoso, collaboration fails not because of a lack of communication, but because of the absence of a digital-institutional bridge that can transform fragile interpersonal trust into resilient, system-based accountability.

2. Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design to provide an in-depth analysis of collaborative governance dynamics in Bondowoso Regency. The case study method is justified because it allows for the investigation of complex social phenomena in their real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon (policy fragmentation) and the context (local bureaucracy) are not clearly evident.

a. Data Collection and Participants

Primary data were obtained through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with purposively selected key informants representing the collaborative spectrum: the Head of DINSOS P3AKB (government), the Director of Edellweis NGO (civil society), Social Rehabilitation Assistants, and representatives of the Children's Forum. Secondary data were gathered through field observations and an extensive review of official policy documents, decrees, and meeting minutes.

b. Data Analysis Procedure



Data were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis, following the updated six-phase framework by Braun & Clarke (2021). This process involved: (1) Familiarization with the data through repeated reading of interview transcripts; (2) Systematic generation of initial codes from the raw data; (3) Development of initial themes based on the dualism of systems and institutionalization patterns; (4) Reviewing and refining potential themes against the dataset; (5) Defining and naming themes; and (6) Producing the final report. This reflexive approach ensures that the researcher's interpretation is both rigorous and sensitive to the administrative context.

c. Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed data source triangulation by cross-referencing information from government actors, NGOs, and field documents. Furthermore, member checking was conducted by sharing summary findings with key informants to verify the accuracy of the interpretations. The research maintains a clear audit trail of the coding process to ensure dependability and confirmability.

d. Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to strict ethical standards. All participants provided informed consent before the interviews. To protect the professional integrity of the informants, data were anonymized where necessary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence.

3. Results and Discussion

a. Results of Collaboration Pattern Analysis

The implementation of child protection policies in Bondowoso Regency serves as a dynamic arena involving multi-actor networks that operate across the formal boundaries of bureaucracy and civil society. Field research findings identify that policy effectiveness does not depend on a single institution but rather on the synergy and interaction among various stakeholders. Based on in-depth interviews, four key actors were identified as the backbone of policy implementation.

First is the Social Affairs, Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Family Planning Agency (Dinas Sosial P3AKB), which holds a central role as the primary formal actor. This agency functions as the initiator, coordinator, and lead implementer of strategic programs, with the Technical Implementation Unit for the Protection of Women and Children (UPT PPA) serving as the main gateway for case management. Second are the Social Rehabilitation Assistants from the Ministry of Social Affairs, who act as an extension of the state, dealing directly with victims, bridging macro-level policies with real-world needs at the micro-level.

Third is the Edellweis Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), which acts as a critical partner to the government. This NGO is active in three domains: policy advocacy, legal and psychological assistance for victims, and community education for prevention. Their flexibility allows them to reach cases that remain unreported to formal institutions. Fourth is the Bondowoso Regency Children's Forum, which plays a unique role as a platform for representing children's voices and aspirations in the development process, ensuring that policies are not merely



top-down.

These actors do not operate in a vacuum but are guided by Bondowoso Regency Regional Regulation Number 3 of 2013 concerning the Implementation of Child Protection. This regulation serves as the primary legal umbrella and a legitimacy tool for all stakeholders. Its main derivative programs include case handling through the UPT PPA and the Child-Friendly Regency development initiative. These programs often serve as the entry point for collaboration between the government and non-governmental actors.

Despite the existence of a legal foundation and a network of actors, field findings indicate serious challenges. The primary issue is the still significant number of violence cases against children, with fluctuating data (for instance, 64 cases in 2022). The next challenge, consistently identified by all informants, is the weak coordination and socialization among agencies, which creates responses that tend to be reactive. Furthermore, there are structural limitations, namely the lack of vital facilities such as safe houses (shelters) and a shortage of competent professional human resources, which directly impact the capacity and quality of child protection services in the field.

Research findings indicate that the collaboration structure places the Local Government (Dinas Sosial P3AKB) in a highly dominant and central position. This agency acts as the primary initiator of programs and as the coordinator for other stakeholders. Almost all formal programs, ranging from socialization to rehabilitation, are initiated and funded through bureaucratic mechanisms centered at the Social Affairs Agency. Consequently, other stakeholders, such as the Edellweis NGO, often find themselves in a position of waiting for directions or invitations from the agency to be involved in official forums. While this dominance provides legal certainty, it simultaneously creates unbalanced power dynamics within the collaboration.

Existing formal coordination mechanisms, such as Cross-Sectoral Coordination Meetings and ad-hoc task forces, were found to be formalistic and reactive. The Rakor, organized by the Social Affairs Agency, tends to be a one-way information dissemination forum from the government to other stakeholders, with minimal space for collective strategic dialogue. Meanwhile, Task Forces are only activated incidentally to respond to complex cases that attract public attention, rather than for long-term prevention planning. As a result, inter-agency interaction has become highly dependent on specific incidents.

Non-governmental stakeholders' perceptions of the local government's dominant role are ambivalent. On the one hand, the Social Affairs Agency is recognized as the holder of formal legitimacy and the primary unavoidable resource. On the other hand, a critical view has emerged, perceiving the government as a bureaucratic, rigid, and top-down partner. The coordination process is more of an arena for listening to socialization rather than a participatory forum for formulating shared strategies.

The dynamics within coordination meetings indicate a structural barrier in the collaborative process, where the participation of non-governmental actors is often reduced to a mere administrative formality to fulfill invitations. These forums tend to operate through a top-down approach, with DINSOS P3AKB dominating the agenda by presenting pre-determined programs while expecting passive support from other stakeholders. This condition severely limits the space for strategic debate, effectively transforming what should be an authentic collaborative platform



into a one-way socialization channel for government initiatives.

Beyond the government structure, non-governmental actors play a crucial role that complements government functions. The Edellweis NGO performs three specific functions: policy advocacy (monitoring regional regulations and budget allocations), victim assistance (flexible psychosocial and legal services), and community education for prevention. Meanwhile, the Bondowoso Regency Children's Forum serves as a unique platform for representing children's voices, ensuring their right to participation through involvement in the Development Planning Deliberation (Musrenbang) and peer education campaigns. Their interaction with the government is hybrid: acting as implementing partners for field programs while simultaneously serving as critical watchdogs that promote accountability.

The success of local development policies depends heavily on the quality of collaboration between government and non-government actors. Research by Putri et al. (2024) emphasizes that institutional obstacles, such as inadequate infrastructure and coordination gaps, require a more robust collaborative framework to achieve strategic goals. In the context of child protection in Bondowoso, this reinforces the argument that addressing policy fragmentation requires a transition from ad-hoc responses to a more structured and institutionalized collaborative governance. Institutional silos often hinder the effectiveness of integrated service centers. Wardani & Kurniawan (2023) argue that the success of child protection delivery through such centers depends heavily on the quality of inter-agency coordination and the elimination of administrative barriers.

The synchronization of clusters within the child-friendly city framework often encounters procedural bottlenecks. As demonstrated by Nuriawati et al. (2024), specialized protection clusters require more than formal mandates; they necessitate integrated operational standards to ensure that collaborative efforts result in substantive protection for children in specialized clusters. The practical operational center of child protection in Bondowoso has shifted from formal offices to instant messaging platforms, specifically WhatsApp groups. While formal coordination meetings remain essential for legal legitimacy, they are often perceived as overly rigid and ceremonial. In urgent scenarios—such as the need for immediate medical forensics late at night—the informal network proves far more effective than formal bureaucratic channels. This informal communication enables rapid mobilization within an hour of notification, suggesting that the current system's resilience relies heavily on these interactions rather than formal institutional procedures.

A key finding of this research is the existence of a dual collaboration mechanism: a rigid formal system and an effective informal system. The informal collaboration network, established through personal communication between key individuals across various agencies (via telephone and WhatsApp Groups), has proven to be the backbone of daily coordination. This network can bypass bureaucratic hurdles and enable rapid responses to cases.



Table 1. Dualism of Collaboration Mechanisms

	Formal System (Coordination Meetings / Task Forces)	Informal System (WhatsApp Groups / Personal)
Characteristics	Rigid & Ceremonial	Flexible & Rapid
	Top-Down (Social Services Dominant)	Personal & Exclusive
	Reactive (Incidental)	Bypassing Bureaucracy
Outcomes	Fails to Build Institutional Trust	Rapid Response to Emergency Cases
	Data Fragmentation & Prevention Functional Gaps	Keeps the System Running (Ad-Hoc)

Source: Author’s Analysis, 2026, adapted from Park et al. (2021)

Although the informal network is effective on a case-by-case basis, the overall collaboration system faces fundamental barriers. The most crucial obstacle is the weakness of an integrated data and information-sharing system. Each institution (Social Affairs Agency, NGOs, and the Police) records case data separately within its own internal silos. This lack of centralized data has serious implications: (1) Evidence-based policy formulation becomes impossible to achieve; (2) Overlapping roles occur in the initial handling of cases, which risks subjecting victims to repeated trauma; and (3) Functional gaps emerge, particularly in coordinated prevention areas and post-rehabilitation programs, as all resources are concentrated on reactive case management.

1) Starting Conditions: Power Asymmetry and Personal Trust

Analysis of the starting conditions of collaboration in child protection policies in Bondowoso Regency reveals a significant power asymmetry among stakeholders. The key actor, DINSOS P3AKB, occupies a dominant position due to its formal authority, policy legality, and budget allocation, particularly through the Technical Implementation Unit of the Integrated Service Center for the Empowerment of Women and Children (UPT PPA). This dominant position poses a crucial initial challenge for Collaborative Governance, as it affects the quality of the resulting dialogue. Ansell & Gash (2008) emphasize that power balance is a prerequisite for achieving substantive dialogue. The dominance of DINSOS P3AKB, while necessary as an initiator, tends to turn formal coordination forums into arenas for information dissemination rather than spaces for participatory dialogue, thereby limiting the roles of critical partners such as the Edellweis NGO and the Children's Forum, who are often regarded merely as formal complements.

However, this power asymmetry is deeply intertwined with the prehistory of relations between these actors. Following the framework of Ansell & Gash (2008) the success of current collaboration is often dictated by whether past interactions were characterized by cooperation or conflict. In Bondowoso, field findings indicate a lingering institutional trauma. For years, the relationship was marked by a 'superior-subordinate' dynamic, in which NGOs like Edellweis reported that their field-level data had been



ignored in favor of formal government reports. This 'exclusionary history' has created a trust deficit, leading NGOs to perceive government invitations as mere ceremonial procedures. Consequently, a subtle competition for legitimacy exists, as NGOs often reach victims more quickly, which the bureaucracy sometimes perceives as an encroachment on its formal domain.

Regarding the trust dimension, there is a dichotomy between personal trust and institutional trust. Personal trust is strongly established among key individuals directly involved in case management (for example, between Social Rehabilitation Assistants and NGO activists) through informal networks such as WhatsApp Groups. This trust serves as the primary pillar for rapid, effective collaboration, especially in responding to emergency cases. However, this trust has not yet translated into institutional trust; non-governmental stakeholders still harbor doubts about the DINSOS P3AKB formal system's commitment, transparency, and speed. The failure to build institutional trust, which should serve as a solid initial foundation, significantly hinders the sustainability and institutionalization of the collaborative process in subsequent stages.

A critical finding of this research is the emergence of a system dualism in which informal networks (via WhatsApp and personal ties) compensate for the rigidities of formal bureaucracy. This phenomenon aligns with recent theoretical developments suggesting that network governance and formal collaborative structures are often entangled, where informal trust acts as a vital lubricant when formal institutional designs fail to provide flexibility (Wang and Ran, 2023). However, as discovered in Bondowoso, over-reliance on these personalistic ties without institutionalization leads to systemic fragility. A common pitfall in local child protection is the lack of balanced stakeholder engagement. According to Sari & Rohman (2023), when stakeholders operate without a clear division of roles, the implementation of protection policies tends to become formalistic, failing to address the root causes of policy fragmentation.

The significant power asymmetry found in Bondowoso, where DINSOS P3AKB holds dominant formal authority, echoes broader theoretical concerns in collaborative governance. As emphasized by Emerson et al. (2012), the initial imbalance of resources and authority can stifle the 'principled engagement' necessary for effective collaboration. In this study, such asymmetry prevents non-governmental actors from participating as equal partners, transforming what should be a deliberative space into a mere administrative briefing.

The failure of child protection governance in Bondowoso is not merely a technical absence of coordination but a causal consequence of institutional inertia. This inertia is triggered by a combination of historical institutional trauma and the lack of a legal-technical bridge to formalize the roles of non-state actors. When formal institutions remain rigid and exclusionary, stakeholders naturally gravitate towards informal shortcuts. Causal analysis suggests that this reliance on informalism creates a 'fragility trap,' in which the system functions only as long as specific individuals remain in place, but collapses during administrative rotations or leadership changes.



2) Institutional Design

The Institutional Design dimension in Ansell and Gash's framework refers to the mechanisms, ground rules, and procedures established to govern the collaborative process. In the context of Bondowoso, findings reveal a serious failure in developing joint Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that specify coordination flows and clarify roles among stakeholders. Each institution, such as DINSOS P3AKB, the Police, and the Health Office, operates based on its own internal SOPs. The absence of these joint SOPs results in overlapping roles and accountability gaps at certain stages of case management, particularly in the post-assistance phase. This creates inefficiency and reinforces the reactive nature of the collaboration, in which stakeholders only coordinate when urgent cases arise, without the support of structured institutional ground rules.

The fragmentation of information systems and data among key stakeholders exacerbates the failure of Institutional Design. Currently, each agency manages child violence case data partially in separate databases, without a single digital platform that can be accessed and held collectively accountable. For instance, case data at the UPT PPA often differs from data handled by the Edellweis NGO or Social Rehabilitation Assistants in the field. This data fragmentation creates evidence-based uncertainty, which directly hinders preventive efforts and collaborative strategic planning. Consequently, Collaborative Governance in Bondowoso is impeded by the lack of fundamental institutional infrastructure (Institutional Design) required to build an Integrated Database and foster an evidence-based shared understanding.

Analyzed through the theoretical framework of Ansell & Gash (2008) the collaborative failure in Bondowoso is rooted in deficiencies across three core aspects. First is the failure to build trust at the institutional level. The trust flourishing within informal networks is personal and exclusive, rather than institutional and inclusive. This means the collaboration is highly fragile and dependent on key individuals rather than a stable system. Second, the failure to establish a shared understanding. Findings show fundamental differences in perception among stakeholders regarding when a case is considered resolved. The government is oriented toward administrative procedures, while NGOs focus on the long-term, holistic recovery of victims. These divergent perceptions, worsened by fragmented data, prevent the formulation of coherent collective strategies.

The findings in Bondowoso reveal a fundamental lack of alignment among stakeholders in defining policy success. This empirical reality confirms the theoretical proposition by Douglas and Ansell (2023), which posits that substantive collaboration is essentially a continuous search for shared understanding. Without a deliberate effort to align these divergent 'frames of reference'—where government actors prioritize procedural compliance while non-governmental partners focus on holistic outcomes—collaboration remains superficial and fails to reach its transformative potential.

3) Facilitative Leadership

The leadership role exercised by the Local Government (DINSOS P3AKB) in this collaboration tends to be administrative and directive rather than facilitative. Directive



leadership focuses on process control, fulfillment of administrative targets, and top-down program direction. This is evident from the organization of coordination meetings, which focus more on information dissemination and requests for support rather than on empowering the collective potential of stakeholders or mediating conflicting interests. Within the Ansell & Gash framework, this failure of facilitative leadership means that no actor effectively performs the crucial functions of resolving conflict, building trust amidst diverse perspectives, and ensuring an equal voice among collaboration participants.

This void in facilitative leadership is exacerbated by the absence of a strong neutral actor, such as academics or civil society organizations, capable of bridging differing interests across sectors. Although the Edellweis NGO and the Children's Forum are present as critical partners, the dominance of resources and formal legitimacy held by DINSOS P3AKB places them in an unequal position, making it difficult for them to assume roles as catalysts or mediators. Consequently, fundamental issues, such as differing perceptions of policy goals and resource allocation, remain unresolved. The failure in the facilitative leadership dimension is a direct cause of why collaborative efforts remain fragile and heavily dependent on informal mechanisms, as there is no leader to ensure that the formal collaborative process is inclusive and sustainable.

The leadership role performed by the local government remains administrative and directive rather than facilitative. The top-down implementation of Coordination Meetings shows that the government is more focused on process control and meeting administrative targets than on empowering stakeholders' collective potential. As a result of these three failures, collaboration in Bondowoso has not yet become institutionalized. The collaboration remains highly ad-hoc (case-based) and personal, thus failing to drive the systemic changes necessary to protect children comprehensively.

4) Collaborative Process

The Collaborative Process dimension highlights the importance of intensive and equitable face-to-face dialogue to achieve common goals. However, findings in Bondowoso Regency indicate that existing formal coordination mechanisms, such as Cross-Sectoral Coordination Meetings, tend to function as top-down, one-way information dissemination forums. The minimal space for strategic debate or critical negotiation leads non-governmental partners to feel that their involvement is merely a formality.

As a consequence of this non-substantive collaborative process, stakeholders fail to build a coherent shared understanding. Fundamental differences in perception emerge, particularly regarding the definition of success and long-term orientation. The government tends toward administrative procedures and short-term targets. In contrast, NGOs and Social Rehabilitation Assistants are oriented toward the long-term holistic recovery of victims. This fundamental disagreement over when a case is resolved, exacerbated by fragmented data, hinders the formulation of a coherent joint strategy between preventive and curative. Thus, the failure in the Collaborative Process dimension marks the conclusion of a series of institutionalization failures in Bondowoso's collaboration.



Table 2: Comparison of Current vs. Ideal Collaboration Model

Dimension	Current Condition (Reactive)	Ideal Model (Institutionalized)
Coordination	Ad-hoc, ceremonial, and incident-driven.	Integrated, routine, and strategic-driven.
Communication	Informal (WhatsApp/Personal networks).	Formalized (Joint Forums & Unified Data).
Data Management	Fragmented & internal silos.	Integrated Digital Platform (Single Data Center).
Operational Basis	Internal SOPs (Overlapping roles).	Joint SOPs (Clear role clarification).
Leadership	Administrative & Directive (Top-down).	Facilitative & Inclusive.

Source: Author’s Analysis, 2026, adapted from Emerson et al. (2012)

The reactive and incidental nature of interactions among stakeholders in Bondowoso highlights a failure in managing the internal dynamics of the collaborative process. According to Choi and Robertson (2024), Effective collaborative governance is not a static arrangement but a process-oriented evolution that requires constant nurturing of relational dynamics. The absence of this process-oriented perspective in Bondowoso explains why stakeholders remain trapped in ad-hoc responses rather than transitioning toward a stable and institutionalized governance system.

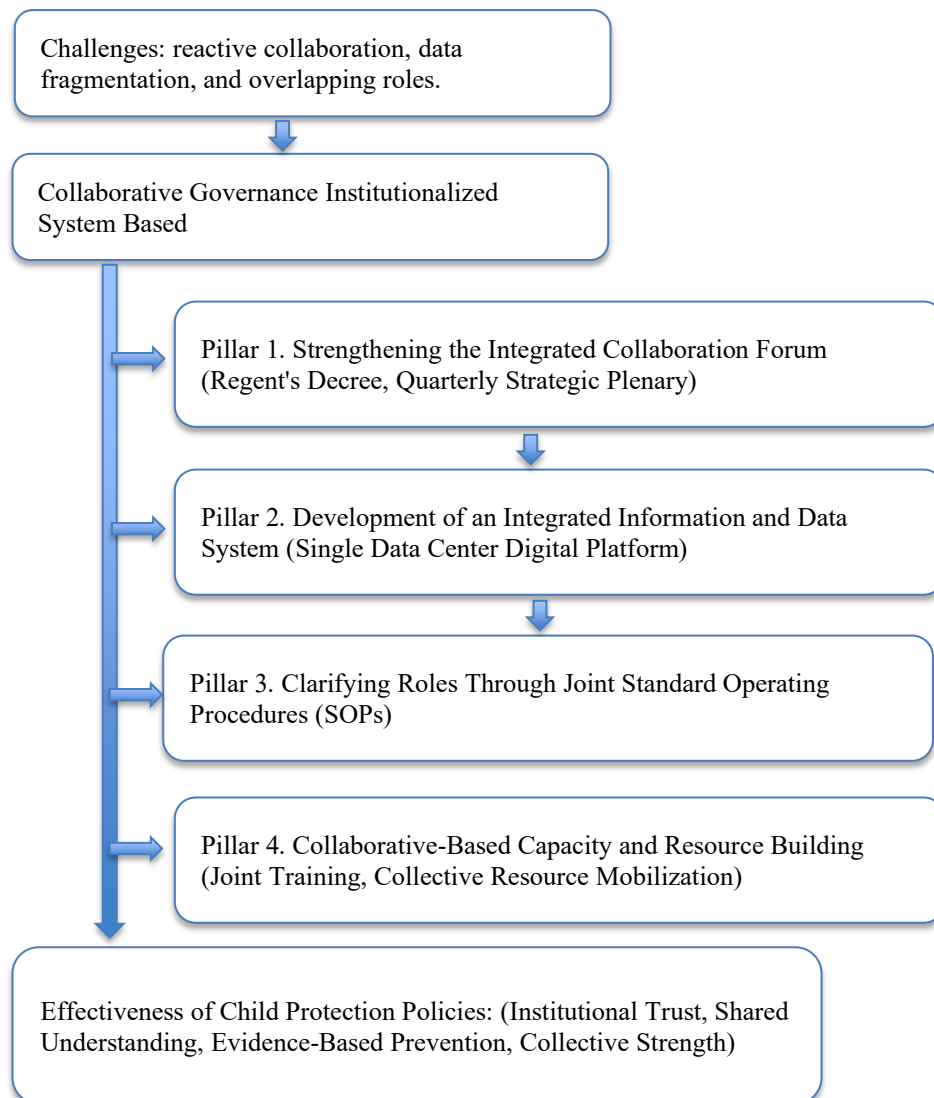
This phenomenon underscores a dualism of collaboration systems as a central conceptual finding of this study. This dualism manifests as a structural gap between the visible formal hierarchy and the invisible informal network driven by personal relationships and WhatsApp-based coordination. While the informal system provides the necessary flexibility for rapid case response, its dominance over the formal system creates a sustainability risk. Theoretically, this dualism suggests that in transitional administrative settings, collaboration often survives on personal resilience rather than institutional strength. Therefore, the proposed institutionalization does not aim to eliminate this dualism but to synchronize the two systems, ensuring that informal agility is backed by formal legal protection and integrated resources.

b. Ideal Collaboration Model for Policy Effectiveness

The failure of collaboration in child protection policies in Bondowoso Regency, as diagnosed through the Ansell and Gash (2008) framework, collectively indicates a failure of institutionalization. Findings regarding Starting Conditions (power asymmetry), Institutional Design (data fragmentation), Facilitative Leadership (directive style), and the Collaborative Process (disseminative dialogue) confirm that the current collaboration is vulnerable, reactive, and heavily dependent on individuals rather than a system. Therefore, the required solution is not merely minor procedural improvements, but rather a system redesign capable of building institutional trust, shared understanding, and sustainable cooperation mechanisms.



In response to the urgent need to overcome policy fragmentation and transform collaboration into an institutionalized form, this research develops a system-based institutionalized collaboration model. This model is a strategic framework aimed at shifting collaboration patterns from ad-hoc and personal to structured, transparent, and evidence-based. The model is designed to address each of the Ansell & Gash failures found in the field and is supported by four interconnected main pillars that must be implemented in an integrated manner. These four pillars, visually illustrated in Figure 2, are: (1) Strengthening Integrated Collaboration Forums; (2) Developing Integrated Information and Data Systems; (3) Clarification of Roles through Joint SOPs; and (4) Collaborative-Based Capacity and Resource Enhancement.



Picture 1: System-Based Institutionalized Collaboration Model

Source: Developed by Author's, 2026

The failure to institutionalize collaboration in Bondowoso reflects a common difficulty in managing complex social policies where inter-organizational boundaries are blurred (Bang & Kim, 2016). To overcome this, a shift toward a system-based model is imperative. This requires



building collaborative-based capacity, where shared training and resource mobilization are not just technical tasks but tools to establish a 'common language' among diverse stakeholders (Addison, 2016).

Based on an analysis of reactive and fragmented collaboration patterns and drawing on the Collaborative Governance theoretical framework, this research formulates a system-based institutionalized collaboration model. This model is recommended to enhance the effectiveness of child protection policies in Bondowoso Regency. Its objective is to shift the collaboration paradigm from one that is ad-hoc and personal toward a mechanism that is institutionalized, sustainable, and participatory. This model does not aim to replace existing mechanisms completely but rather to strengthen, institutionalize, and synergize the potential of stakeholders that have thus far operated in isolation. The model is built upon four main pillars.

The first pillar is strengthening integrated collaboration forums. It is recommended to revitalize the coordination meetings into a functional forum with a clear mandate established through a Regent's Decree (SK Bupati). The mandate should be expanded beyond mere case management to include collective strategic planning, monitoring, and budget advocacy. This forum must have a regular meeting schedule, such as quarterly for strategic plenaries and monthly for technical case meetings, and involve all stakeholder representatives (including field technical staff and the Children's Forum) equitably to build trust and shared understanding.

The second pillar is the Development of Integrated Information and Data Systems. To overcome the fundamental barrier of data fragmentation, a web-based digital platform serving as a single data center is proposed. This system must feature standardized data input for all agencies (UPT PPA, NGOs, Social Assistants) and a real-time case monitoring flow. With this system, case management progress can be monitored transparently, preventing role overlaps, and its analytical dashboard can be utilized by leaders to formulate accurate evidence-based prevention policies. The proposed integration of child protection data into a unified digital platform is aligned with the growing role of technology in modern governance. Yi (2023) emphasizes that digital platforms are no longer merely technical tools but are fundamental components of collaborative governance, facilitating transparency and mediating complex data-sharing among diverse actors. In Bondowoso's context, such a platform serves as the necessary institutional infrastructure to eliminate data fragmentation and enable evidence-based decision-making.

The urgency of digital transformation in child protection services is increasingly evident in various regional initiatives. As discussed by Astuti & Khusna (2025) in the *Jurnal Penelitian Administrasi Publik*, the implementation of digital platforms such as SIAP PPAK in Surabaya aims to facilitate complaint processing and education. Still, it often faces challenges in optimization and user accessibility. This underscores the necessity of the proposed integrated information system in Bondowoso, which must not only focus on technical availability but also on the quality of service dimensions—such as efficiency and reliability—to ensure a robust collaborative environment for stakeholder coordination. Technological innovation plays a vital role in modernizing child protection services. As noted by Pratama & Utami (2024) integrated information systems are essential for public service innovation, particularly in managing violence-related cases where real-time data sharing is critical for rapid response.

The third pillar is role clarification through Joint Standard Operating Procedures (Joint



SOPs). To address overlapping roles and functional gaps, the Integrated Collaboration Forum is recommended to facilitate role-mapping workshops. The results must be formalised in an agreed-upon Joint SOP document that specifically defines the workflow and responsibilities of each actor: DINSOS P3AKB as the system coordinator and resource provider; NGOs as the frontline for outreach and intensive assistance; Social Rehabilitation Assistants as case managers; and the Children's Forum as pioneers and reporters from the child's perspective.

The fourth pillar is Collaborative-Based Capacity and Resource Enhancement. To address the challenges of limited budget and human resources, this model proposes a shift from a go-it-alone paradigm toward a collective approach. The primary proposal is to implement joint training programs (e.g., integrated case management) involving technical staff from all agencies. The objective is to establish a common language, enhance competence, and simultaneously strengthen trust at the institutional level. Furthermore, a collective resource mobilization mechanism is proposed, such as drafting joint proposals (to the local government or private sector/CSR) and sharing non-financial resources (facilities, modules) to achieve efficiency.

Although this model is developed based on the specific socio-political dynamics of Bondowoso, the Institutionalized System-Based Collaborative Governance Model possesses significant transferability. Its core pillars—integrated SOPs, data synchronization, and cross-sectoral forums—address universal challenges in local public administration, particularly in developing regions facing high policy fragmentation. The model can be adapted to other jurisdictions by recalibrating its digital-data pillar to local ICT infrastructure levels. In contrast, its structural pillars remain relevant across fragmented social policy environments, such as poverty alleviation or stunting reduction programs in diverse local contexts.

The proposed model extends collaborative governance theory by introducing Systemic Redesign through Digital-Institutional Bridging as an explicit conceptual contribution. Moving beyond the descriptive frameworks of Emerson et al. (2012), this study theorizes that in fragmented local bureaucracies, the transition from ad-hoc to institutionalized collaboration requires a middle layer. This digital system is legally codified into the SOPs of all actors. This extension shifts the focus from managing people to designing systems, offering a theoretical pathway to stabilize collaboration in environments characterized by high turnover and low institutional trust.

c. Theoretical Implications for Collaborative Governance Literature

The findings of this research offer significant theoretical implications for the discourse on collaborative governance, particularly in extending the integrative framework proposed by Emerson et al. (2012) and (Ansell & Gash, 2008). While classical theories emphasize starting conditions and principled engagement, this study suggests that in a developing administrative context like Bondowoso, these elements are insufficient without a robust digital-institutional bridge.

First, this research provides an extension to the concept of institutional design. Traditionally, institutional design focuses on formal rules and membership. This study argues that in a fragmented policy environment, institutional design must include a digital intermediary layer (as proposed in the System-Based Institutionalized Collaboration Model). This digital layer acts not



merely as a technical tool but as an institutional anchor that stabilizes collaboration when formal personal networks fail or undergo leadership transitions.

Second, this study offers a contextual adaptation of shared understanding. In the literature, shared understanding is often treated as a cognitive alignment between actors. This research demonstrates that in cases of child protection, shared understanding must be materialized through data integration. Without synchronized data, shared understanding remains abstract and fails to translate into effective operational synergy. Cross-sectoral coordination remains the most significant hurdle in localized child protection. Fitriani & Hidayat (2023) demonstrate that policy fragmentation often stems from inconsistent leadership and the lack of a formalized communication platform among local actors

Finally, this research contributes to the literature by highlighting the dualism of systems in collaborative governance. It posits that informal networks, while often viewed as a lubricant for collaboration, can become a structural barrier if not formalized. Therefore, the institutionalization of collaboration must be viewed as a process of systematizing the informal, where personal trust is transformed into systemic accountability. This perspective encourages future scholars to look beyond the dichotomy of formal vs. informal and focus on how digital-based institutionalization can harmonize these two spheres in public management.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the failure to address child protection policy fragmentation in Bondowoso Regency stems from a persistent dualism in which reactive informal networks dominate rigid, stagnant formal hierarchies. This research successfully answers the research questions by identifying that current collaboration lacks institutional durability due to a trust deficit rooted in historical institutional trauma and the absence of a legal-technical bridge. The central empirical synthesis reveals that while interpersonal trust enables rapid case response in the short term, it fails to provide systemic accountability. Consequently, this study proposes the Institutionalized System-Based Collaborative Governance Model as a strategic redesign. This model, supported by four pillars—forum strengthening, data synchronization, joint SOPs, and resource enhancement—serves as a digital-institutional bridge to transform ad-hoc coordination into a sustainable and accountable framework.

For stakeholders, it is urgently recommended that the Bondowoso Regency Government, particularly DINSOS P3AKB, formally codify informal collaborative practices into integrated Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and a unified digital data platform. This move is rational and essential to ensure that collaboration survives leadership transitions and administrative rotations.

This research acknowledges limitations, particularly its focus on a single geographic case and a qualitative approach. While the proposed model possesses significant transferability, its scalability should be tested in regions with different administrative cultures. Future research should explore the long-term impact of digital-based institutionalization on data security and the sustainability of collaborative governance in other public policy sectors beyond child protection.



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