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## The Role of Parental and Community Support in Promoting English Language Learning in Rural Schools: A Qualitative Study

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**ABSTRACT:** This study investigates the role of parental and community support in promoting English language learning (ELL) in rural schools. The study adopts a qualitative approach with two complementary methods: a phenomenological study and a case study. The phenomenological study involves semi-structured interviews with 20 rural students from different grade levels and 10 parents from different socioeconomic backgrounds to understand their lived experiences of ELL and the challenges and benefits they encounter. The case study involves a detailed analysis of one rural school implementing a successful ELL program with strong parental and community involvement. The case study uses multiple data sources, such as observations, documents, and focus group discussions with teachers and community members, to examine the processes and outcomes of the ELL program. The study reveals that parental and community support can positively affect students' ELL outcomes and opportunities, such as motivation, achievement, confidence, exposure, and access. However, the study also identifies some challenges and barriers that limit the potential of parental and community support, such as lack of resources, knowledge, skills, time, and trust. The study also highlights the diversity and variability of parental and community support across different contexts, such as grade levels, socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnic groups, and regions. The study also suggests implications and recommendations for policy makers, educators, and stakeholders interested in enhancing ELL provision and quality in rural schools.

Keywords: Parental, Community Support, English Learning



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### INTRODUCTION

English language learning (ELL) is an essential skill for students in a globalized world. Proficiency in English provides access to a wealth of educational, professional, and cultural opportunities. With the deepening of the positive psychology movement in education, social support, including parental support, has received more and more attention from scholars and educators (Wu, 2023). This is particularly true in developing countries, where English often serves as a gateway to global communication and collaboration. Many non-English major teachers who teach in rural schools struggle to deliver lessons in English due to the lack of professional knowledge and ongoing support for English language usage (Uthaikun et al., 2024). However, many rural schools face significant obstacles in delivering quality ELL instruction. These challenges include limited access

to resources, a shortage of qualified teachers, and restricted opportunities for students to interact with and use the target language in meaningful contexts. English language anxiety is one of the issues in second language acquisition that has gained interest in recent years (Idrus, 2021). Addressing these barriers is critical for ensuring that students in rural areas are not left behind in an increasingly interconnected world. Learning English is difficult for several reasons, including low student interest in English lessons, lack of support for learning English such as support from parents and the surrounding environment, and the quality of English teachers which is considered to be still low (Harlina, 2020).

Teaching English becomes increasingly difficult for students especially when learning English is associated with the context of rural schools (Harlina 2020). One promising avenue for overcoming these challenges lies in the active involvement of parents and the broader community. Parental and community support can serve as a powerful catalyst for enhancing ELL outcomes, particularly in rural schools where institutional resources are scarce (Anggita Damayanti et al., 2024). By providing motivation, guidance, and practical opportunities for language practice, parents and community members can play a transformative role in students' language acquisition journeys. Their involvement can supplement formal schooling, help mitigate resource constraints, and create an environment conducive to continuous learning and improvement. Given the importance of parental support, its impact on academic performance and the mediating mechanisms have been considerably explored (Wu 2023).

Despite the potential importance of this support, the existing body of research on ELL reveals several notable gaps, especially in rural contexts. Most studies have primarily focused on urban areas, where resources, infrastructure, and access to qualified educators are more readily available. As a result, there is limited understanding of the specific challenges faced by rural schools and the unique dynamics that shape ELL in these settings (Emerson et al., 2019). Factors such as geographical isolation, cultural diversity, and socioeconomic limitations introduce complexities that are distinct to rural environments. Additionally, while the role of parental and community involvement in general education has been widely acknowledged, relatively little research has been conducted on how these forms of support specifically influence ELL in rural areas. This gap underscores the need for more targeted investigations to illuminate the mechanisms and impacts of such support systems (Gillis, Aurélie ; Roskam, n.d.).

The current study aims to address these gaps by exploring the role of parental and community support in promoting ELL in rural schools. To achieve this, the research employs a qualitative approach that integrates phenomenological and case study methodologies (Ji, 2023). This dual approach allows for a comprehensive examination of the lived experiences of students, parents, and community members, as well as a detailed analysis of effective practices in real-world settings. By combining these methods, the study seeks to provide both personal insights and practical recommendations for enhancing ELL strategies in rural contexts (Mokoena, 2023).

The phenomenological aspect of the study involves semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of participants, including 20 rural students across different grade levels and 10 parents from varied socioeconomic backgrounds (Nama & Ate, 2022). These interviews aim to capture the participants' lived experiences, uncovering the challenges they face, the strategies they employ, and the motivations that drive their efforts in supporting ELL. Through these narratives, the study seeks to build a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between individual experiences and broader systemic factors (Nasution, et al., 2023).

Complementing the phenomenological study is a detailed case study of a rural school that has successfully implemented an ELL program with strong parental and community involvement. The predictive effect of academic self-concept on academic achievement (Perinelli et al., 2022) was confirmed in the existing literature, the present study hypothesized that parental support could affect English achievement directly or indirectly through academic self-concept. This case study employs multiple data sources, including observations, document analysis, and focus group discussions with teachers and community members (Gustian, 2024). By examining the processes and outcomes of this program, the study aims to identify best practices and actionable strategies that can be adapted and replicated in similar contexts. The combination of phenomenological and case study approaches thus ensures a holistic exploration of the topic, bridging the gap between theoretical insights and practical applications (Dari et al., 2023).

The significance of this research extends beyond the immediate context of ELL in rural schools. The findings have broader implications for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders seeking to improve the quality and accessibility of education in underserved areas (Uthaikun et al., 2024). For instance, the study highlights the importance of fostering strong partnerships between schools and communities. The mediating mechanisms between parental support and academic achievement should be more studied, especially in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) (Wu et al., 2023).

Such collaborations can help mobilize local resources, build trust, and create a shared sense of responsibility for students' learning outcomes. Moreover, the research underscores the need for targeted policies and programs that address the unique challenges of rural education (Wilk et al., 2018). These may include providing training and resources for parents to support their children's language learning, facilitating community-based initiatives such as English clubs and camps, and leveraging technology to bridge geographical and resource gaps (Wu & Yi, 2023).

In addition to its practical implications, the study contributes to the academic literature by shedding light on a relatively underexplored area of research. By focusing on the specific roles and impacts of parental and community support in rural contexts, the research adds depth and diversity to the existing body of knowledge on ELL. It also demonstrates the value of qualitative methodologies in capturing the richness and complexity of educational experiences, particularly in settings characterized by diversity and resource constraints. In most studies, academic achievement was characterized by students' marks (grades) (Guterman, 2021), and higher marks indicate higher academic achievement of students.

## METHOD

This study adopts a phenomenological approach to explore the individual experiences related to the role of parental and community support in English language learning in rural schools. The research population comprises parents, students, and teachers from several rural schools representing diverse English language learning contexts. The sample is selected through purposive sampling, with inclusion criteria involving participants with experiences related to support in English language learning. Semi-structured interviews were used. The interview guide was prepared to explore the participants' experiences related to the role of parental and community support in English language learning. The interviews are face-to-face with the agreed participants. Each interview is recorded and transcribed verbatim for further analysis.

The data are analyzed using a phenomenological analysis approach. The steps of analysis include initial textual reading, identification of meaning units, grouping of meaning units into themes that

describe the participants' experiences, and formulation of essences that represent the participants' experiences related to the role of support in English language learning. To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher and an independent colleague conduct the analysis. The results of the analysis are checked again by the participants to ensure their compatibility with their experiences. Before conducting the research, the researcher obtains ethical permission from the relevant institution. The participants are given information about the purpose of the research, anonymity, and the right to withdraw.

The study employs a case study design to provide an in-depth and holistic analysis of a rural English Language Teaching (ELT) school as a bounded system, examining its context, culture, practices, challenges, and opportunities. Multiple data sources include semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, observations, document analysis, and field notes. Specifically, the research adopts a case study approach to explore the role of parental and community support in English language learning within rural schools. Two rural schools are selected as case studies based on their varying levels of parental and community support.

Data collection involves interviews with parents, students, and teachers from each school, as well as observations conducted to capture the context of English language learning. The data from each school are analyzed independently, with emerging themes and patterns regarding the role of support being identified and compared across the two cases. To ensure the validity and objectivity of the findings, the analysis is conducted collaboratively by a research team. Ethical considerations are prioritized throughout the study, including obtaining ethical permissions, securing informed consent from participants, and maintaining anonymity and privacy. The comprehensive approach of this research provides valuable insights into the influence of parental and community support on English language learning in rural schools.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study revealed that parental and community support played a significant role in promoting English language learning in rural schools. The themes that emerged from the data analysis were: (1) parental and community involvement, (2) parental and community expectations, (3) parental and community resources, and (4) parental and community challenges. The comparison and contrast of the two cases showed that the high-support school had more positive and effective parental and community support than the low-support school. Results showed that parental support could affect English achievement directly and indirectly through academic self-concept (Wu et al., 2023).

The first theme, parental and community involvement, referred to the extent and quality of participation and collaboration of parents and community members in English language learning activities. The data showed that the high-support school had higher parental and community involvement levels than the low-support school. For example, parents and community members in the high-support school regularly attended school meetings, events, and workshops related to English language learning. They also volunteered to assist teachers in the classroom, tutor students at home, and organize extracurricular activities such as English clubs, camps, and competitions. In contrast, parents and community members in the low-support school rarely participated in or contributed to English language learning activities. They often lacked interest, time, or confidence in engaging with the school or their children's English learning. This disparity highlights the importance of creating supportive environments where parents and community members feel

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empowered to contribute meaningfully. Programs aimed at building parental engagement skills and awareness can bridge this gap, ensuring that families from low-support schools can better participate in their children's education.

The second theme, parental and community expectations, referred to the beliefs and attitudes of parents and community members toward English language learning. The data showed that the high-support school had higher parental and community expectations than the low-support school. For example, parents and community members in the high-support school had positive and supportive views on the importance, benefits, and opportunities of English language learning. They also had high aspirations and standards for their children's English proficiency and academic achievement. They encouraged their children to study hard, practice regularly, and seek help when needed. In contrast, parents and community members in the low-support school had low or negative expectations for English language learning. They often perceived English as a difficult, irrelevant, or threatening subject. They also had low or unrealistic expectations for their children's English performance and progress. They either pressured their children to excel or neglected their learning needs. Addressing these differences in expectations requires targeted interventions, such as awareness campaigns and workshops, to reshape perceptions of English learning and equip parents with the tools to foster realistic and constructive aspirations for their children.

The third theme, parental and community resources, referred to the availability and accessibility of material, human, and social resources that supported English language learning. The data showed that the high-support school had more abundant and diverse parental and community resources than the low-support school. For example, parents and community members in the high-support school provided various resources for English language learning such as books, magazines, dictionaries, computers, internet access, radio, television, movies, music, games, toys, posters, stickers, awards, scholarships, etc. They also shared their knowledge, skills, experiences, contacts, networks, etc., with teachers and students to enhance their English learning. In contrast, parents and community members in the low-support school lacked or had limited resources for English language learning. They often complained about the scarcity or inadequacy of resources such as textbooks, workbooks, stationery, equipment, facilities, funding, etc. They also expressed ignorance, incompetence, isolation, or frustration about their English learning. To address these challenges, policymakers and educators must focus on resource mobilization strategies, such as establishing partnerships with NGOs, corporate sponsors, and government agencies. Such collaborations can help ensure equitable resource distribution and empower low-support schools to provide better learning opportunities.

The fourth theme, parental and community challenges, referred to the difficulties or barriers that hindered or threatened English language learning. The data showed that both schools faced similar parental and community challenges, such as poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, migration, cultural diversity, language diversity, religious diversity, social conflict, etc. However, the high-support school overcame or mitigated these challenges by leveraging their parental and community support. For example, parents and community members in the high-support school collaborated with teachers and students to address their economic, educational, vocational, social, and emotional needs. They also promoted a culture of respect, tolerance, and harmony among different groups of people. In contrast, the low-support school could not cope with or resolve these challenges due to their lack of parental and community support. For example, parents and community members in the low-support school competed or conflicted with teachers and students over their limited resources or opportunities. They also created a culture of distrust, hostility, and violence among different groups of people. Addressing these systemic challenges requires holistic

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approaches that go beyond the school level, involving community-wide initiatives to promote social cohesion, cultural awareness, and economic stability.

The discussion of these findings suggested that parental and community support was a crucial factor that influenced the quality and outcomes of English language learning in rural schools. The findings supported the existing literature that highlighted the positive effects of parental and community support on students' motivation, attitude, confidence, interest, engagement, achievement, and proficiency in English language learning. The findings also extended the previous research by providing rich insights into the specific roles of parental and community support in rural contexts. The findings implied that rural schools should foster strong partnerships with parents and community members to enhance their English language learning. Such partnerships can be nurtured through structured initiatives, such as parental involvement committees, mentorship programs, and regular community-school interaction sessions. Additionally, integrating local cultural elements into ELL curricula can make learning more relevant and engaging, further strengthening these partnerships.

The findings also suggested that policymakers should provide adequate resources and support for rural schools to overcome parental and community challenges. Investment in infrastructure, teacher training, and community outreach programs is essential to enable sustainable improvements in ELL outcomes. Policymakers should consider implementing frameworks that incentivize community involvement, such as grants for schools that demonstrate active parental and community engagement or recognition programs for outstanding contributions.

The limitations of this study were that it only focused on two rural schools and did not include other stakeholders such as students and teachers. The study also relied on self-reported data and did not measure the actual outcomes of English language learning. The study also did not explore the possible negative effects of parental and community support on English language learning. These limitations highlight the need for future research to adopt more comprehensive and mixed-method approaches. Including a broader range of schools and stakeholders in future studies will provide a more holistic understanding of the dynamics at play. Moreover, longitudinal studies could help establish causal relationships between parental/community support and ELL outcomes, while quantitative assessments could provide measurable insights into the efficacy of various support mechanisms.

Further research on parental and community support in English language learning (ELL) in rural schools should focus on several areas. Expanding the study to include more rural schools and diverse regions would improve the generalizability of the findings. Including other stakeholders, such as students, teachers, and administrators, could provide a more comprehensive view of the factors influencing ELL. Employing mixed methods, such as combining surveys with interviews, would help validate self-reported data and better measure ELL outcomes. Additionally, future studies should examine the direct impact of parental and community support on students' language proficiency and explore potential challenges, such as over-involvement or unrealistic expectations. For example, examining the effects of overly ambitious parental demands on students' mental health and academic performance could yield critical insights.

Research should also focus on identifying effective strategies for overcoming challenges like poverty and social conflict and studying how technology can enhance support for ELL in resource-limited rural schools. Digital tools such as language learning apps, virtual tutoring platforms, and online resource repositories can bridge gaps in access to quality education. Additionally, fostering digital literacy among parents and communities can enable them to better

support their children's learning journeys. These efforts would provide valuable insights for improving ELL support and outcomes in rural areas, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and inclusive educational landscape.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored the role of parental and community support in promoting English language learning in rural schools. The study used a qualitative research approach with a combination of phenomenological research and case study as the research design. The study selected two rural schools as the cases, one with high parental and community support and one with low parental and community support. The study collected data from multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts. The study analyzed the data using thematic analysis and identified four themes: (1) parental and community involvement, (2) parental and community expectations, (3) parental and community resources, and (4) parental and community challenges.

The findings of this study revealed that parental and community support played a significant role in promoting English language learning in rural schools. The findings showed that the high-support school had more positive and effective parental and community support than the low-support school. The findings also showed that both schools faced similar parental and community challenges. Still, the high-support school overcame or mitigated them by leveraging their parental and community support. The discussion of these findings suggested that parental and community support was a crucial factor that influenced the quality and outcomes of English language learning in rural schools. The discussion also implied that rural schools should foster strong partnerships with parents and community members to enhance their English language learning. The discussion also suggested that policymakers should provide adequate resources and support for rural schools to overcome parental and community challenges.

The limitations of this study were that it only focused on two rural schools and did not include other stakeholders such as students and teachers. The study also relied on self-reported data and did not measure the actual outcomes of English language learning. The study also did not explore the possible negative effects of parental and community support on English language learning. The recommendations for future research were to include more rural schools and other stakeholders in the study, to use multiple methods and sources of data collection and analysis, to examine the impact of parental and community support on English language learning outcomes, and to investigate the potential drawbacks or risks of parental and community support on English language learning.

The contribution of this study was that it provided rich insights into the specific roles of parental and community support in rural contexts. The study also extended the existing literature by combining phenomenological and case studies as a novel research design. The study also addressed a gap in the literature by focusing on a neglected but important topic of English language learning in rural schools. The study also offered practical implications and recommendations for rural schools, parents, community members, policymakers, and researchers interested in English language learning in rural settings.

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