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School–Parent Partnership Strategies to Support Students' Transition to Junior High School (A Case Study at SDN Tegallega 1 and SDN Murnisari, Cianjur Regency)

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Abstract: This study examines school–parent partnership strategies in supporting students' transition from primary school to junior high school in two contrasting settings: SDN Tegallega 1 (urban) and SDN Murnisari (rural) in Cianjur Regency, Indonesia. Although national policies mandate family engagement and 12-year compulsory education, partnership practices at the school level are often still incidental, one-way, and not explicitly directed at preparing parents—academically, financially, and psychologically—to accompany their children to the next level. Using a qualitative multiple case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The findings show that both schools implemented partnership strategies consisting of joint program planning, parenting activities, learning assistance, and intensive communication through school committees. However, contextual differences shaped the emphasis: the urban school prioritized academic preparation and PPDB literacy, while the rural school emphasized motivation, moral support, and access facilitation. The study concludes that school–parent partnerships that are planned, participatory, and sustained can increase students' readiness to continue to junior high school and strengthen positive relations among schools, parents, and students. The study recommends formalizing partnership programs in school work plans and developing two-way communication mechanisms tailored to local socio-economic conditions.

Keywords: Educational Continuity, Primary School, School–Parent Partnership

1 Introduction

A school–parent partnership is a deliberate, organized collaboration between the school as an educational provider and parents as primary caregivers to ensure children's success and continuity of schooling. In the Indonesian context, continuity from primary to junior high school (SMP) is not determined solely by students' academic readiness; it is also shaped by parents' motivation, economic capacity, information about admissions (PPDB), and the school's ability to engage families in planned, participatory programs [1], [2]. This aligns with Deming's quality-management view that improvement is achieved when all components of the system communicate and work toward a shared goal [3]

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Despite national policies promoting 12-year compulsory education and family involvement—such as Ministerial Regulation No. 13/2007 on principals' competence and Ministerial Regulation No. 30/2017 on family engagement—many primary schools still run partnership activities in an ad hoc way: committee meetings at report-card time, sporadic parenting sessions, or incidental meetings when problems occur [1], [2]. Preliminary observations in Cianjur Regency likewise showed that partnership programs rarely appeared as a distinct, long-term plan aimed at preparing parents—knowledge-wise, financially, and psychologically—to accompany their children to SMP.

International and Indonesian literature consistently shows that structured, data-based, and two-way family–school partnership improves student participation, attendance, and transition to higher levels. Epstein's six types of involvement demonstrate that parenting, communicating, and learning at home are strong predictors of transition success [4]. Henderson and Mapp's synthesis of over 50 studies found that schools that deliberately organize parent involvement show higher persistence and smoother grade-to-grade progression, especially among lower-SES families [5]. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler further explain that parents' involvement is activated when they feel invited by the school and believe that their participation will make a difference [6] These views reinforce Indonesian studies on school–community partnerships that emphasize planned communication, parent empowerment, and contextualization to local socio-economic realities as drivers of schooling continuity [7], [8].

This study therefore aims to (1) describe school–parent partnership strategies used by SDN Tegallega 1 (urban setting) and SDN Murnisari (rural setting) in supporting students' continuation to SMP; (2) analyze how contextual differences shape planning, implementation, and evaluation of the partnership; and (3) formulate implications for a participatory, sustainable partnership model at the primary level. The contribution of this study lies in comparing two different contexts and in showing that partnership becomes more effective when it is managed—planned, organized, implemented, and evaluated—rather than treated as a routine administrative activity [4], [9].

2 Method

This research employed a qualitative approach utilizing an exploratory multiple case study design to gain a profound understanding of how school–parent partnership strategies are conceptually formed, practically implemented, and evaluated within two contrasting primary school contexts [10], [11]. The selected sites, SDN Tegallega 1 (representing an urban environment) and SDN Murnisari (representing a rural setting), were chosen purposively to enable a robust cross-case comparison regarding the variables of socio-economic background, parental readiness, and school management styles.

Data collection relied on triangulation through three complementary techniques to ensure validity. First, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, and committee members to investigate partnership planning and

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communication barriers. Second, participant observation was utilized during meetings and parenting activities to capture authentic interaction patterns. Third, document analysis was performed on school work plans and official partnership guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture. To guide this process, instruments were constructed by adapting Deming's quality principles—specifically continuous improvement and leadership commitment—to assessing whether parents were genuinely engaged as co-owners of the educational programs [12].

Subsequent data analysis utilized Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model, processing through data condensation, display, and conclusion verification to systematically map convergences and divergences between the schools [13]. To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied strict credibility measures, including member checking and thick description, consistent with established Indonesian qualitative research standards [14]. This methodological rigor allowed for the identification of both universal strategies and context-specific adaptations in partnership management.

3 Result

The findings indicate that both schools had implemented school–parent partnerships, but with different levels of formality and emphasis, largely influenced by their urban–rural contexts.

3.1 Planning: Contextualizing Strategies for Partnership

The planning phase serves as the foundational pillar for school-parent partnerships, yet its execution varies significantly depending on the environmental context. At SDN Tegallega 1, located in an urban setting, the planning process is characterized by a high degree of formalism and administrative structure. The partnership planning is not an ad-hoc activity but is integrated into the school's strategic management cycle. It begins with formal school committee meetings that operate like professional board meetings, attended by the principal, senior teachers, and elected parent representatives. These discussions result in concrete programs being explicitly written into the School Work Plan (*Rencana Kerja Sekolah*/RKS) and the Medium-Term Development Plan (RKJM). This formalization ensures that partnership activities—such as parenting classes, intensive learning sessions for Grade VI, and socialization regarding the intricate PPDB (New Student Admission) pathways (zoning, affirmation, and achievement)—are legally and structurally binding. The needs identification process here is collaborative and data-driven, aiming to map specific barriers to education continuation, whether they are economic constraints or a lack of information regarding "favorite" junior high schools.

Conversely, at SDN Murnisari, which operates in a rural context, the planning landscape is markedly different, prioritizing cultural consensus over bureaucratic formalism. Planning is simpler, more flexible, and deeply rooted in the communal nature of the village. Instead of formal strategic documents, agreements are typically reached during class parent meetings (*rapat orang tua murid*) or informal gatherings. The primary focus of these planning sessions is pragmatic and fundamental:

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motivating children to stay in school, preparing basic learning facilities at home, and ensuring parents are mentally and administratively ready to accompany their children during the PPDB period. Documentation is generally limited to simple minutes of meetings, reflecting a culture that values oral agreement and trust (*guyub*) over written contracts. This sharp contrast validates educational management theories suggesting that while good planning is universal, its form must be realistic and adaptable to the school's environment. As noted in the literature, planning that ignores the local socio-cultural context—such as trying to impose rigid urban bureaucracy on a rural community—is likely to fail [7]. Thus, both schools demonstrate effective planning within their respective ecological niches.

3.2 Organizing: Structuring Collaboration through Distinct Frameworks

The organizing function transforms the strategic plans into operational realities by defining roles, responsibilities, and the structure of collaboration. In both case studies, the School Committee functions as the formal bridge between the institution and the families, yet the mechanism of this bridge differs. At SDN Tegallega 1, the organizing structure mirrors a modern organizational hierarchy. There is a clear and professional distribution of tasks: the Principal acts as the policy holder and visionary; the Committee Chair serves as the primary liaison officer who negotiates parent interests; teachers act as the technical executors of parenting and academic assistance programs; and parents are positioned as active participants and co-owners of the program. This clarity of roles is essential in an urban setting where parents come from diverse professional backgrounds and expect professional governance. The structure minimizes ambiguity and ensures that complex programs, like preparing for the achievement-based PPDB track, are handled by the right personnel.

In contrast, SDN Murnisari utilizes a more organic approach to organizing, leveraging the strong social capital inherent in rural communities. While a formal structure exists on paper to satisfy regulatory requirements, the *actual* organizing relies heavily on personal proximity and informal networks. The school mobilizes participation not through official circulars alone, but through religious leaders (*Tokoh Agama*) and community elders (*Tokoh Masyarakat*). These figures act as informal influencers who encourage parents to support their children's education. For example, if the school needs to organize a meeting about continuing education, they might coordinate with the local hamlet head or religious teacher to spread the word. This reliance on social cohesion is a strategic adaptation; in a rural setting where formal hierarchy might feel distant or intimidating, leveraging the "kinship" network ensures higher engagement and trust. This finding highlights that effective organizing in school-parent partnerships is not about rigid adherence to a single model, but about aligning the organizational structure with the existing social fabric of the community.

3.3 Implementation: Tailoring Activities to Socio-Economic Realities

The implementation phase reveals how the schools translate their plans into action, with activities tailored to meet the specific needs and capacities of their respective parent demographics. At SDN Tegallega 1, the program implementation is comprehensive and multi-faceted, reflecting the higher demands and resources of an urban community. The school executes a "complete package" of interventions: early-semester socialization meetings to set expectations, specialized parenting seminars

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titled “Preparing Children for SMP” to address psychological readiness, and academic interventions like remedial and enrichment classes for Grade VI students. Furthermore, the school actively assists parents in navigating the bureaucratic complexities of scholarship applications or education aid (KIP/PIP). Communication is fluid and continuous, supported by digital infrastructure such as dedicated WhatsApp groups and periodic face-to-face evaluation meetings. This high-intensity implementation caters to urban parents who are often highly invested in their children’s academic competitiveness and require real-time information.

On the other hand, implementation at SDN Murnisari is characterized by a "motivational and access-oriented" approach. Recognizing that the primary challenge in their rural context is not necessarily academic competitiveness but the risk of dropout due to economic or mindset factors, the activities are designed to be encouraging rather than demanding. The core implementation involves motivational talks emphasizing the long-term value of continuing to Junior High School (SMP), organizing simple neighborhood learning groups, and coordinating directly with the village government to solve logistical issues like transportation or financial support. The school’s message to parents is often simple but profound: "Keep your children in school, even if it is just at the nearest SMP." They do not burden parents with complex academic parenting demands but focus on the basics of support. This pattern strongly confirms the family–school involvement literature, which argues that partnership forms must be congruent with the families’ social and economic realities; imposing an urban, academic-heavy partnership model on a rural, working-class community would likely result in alienation rather than engagement [15].

3.4 Evaluation and Follow-Up: Closing the Loop for Continuous Improvement

The final stage of the management cycle, evaluation and follow-up, ensures that the partnership strategies remain relevant and effective. At SDN Tegallega 1, the evaluation process is systematic and data-centric. The school conducts periodic reviews through formal committee meetings where feedback is analyzed. Additionally, they utilize parent satisfaction questionnaires to gather quantitative and qualitative data regarding the school’s performance and the quality of communication. The results of these evaluations are immediately acted upon; for instance, if parents express anxiety about the zoning system, the school strengthens cooperation with target SMPs to get clearer information or increases the frequency of academic support sessions. This "closed-loop" system allows the school to practice continuous improvement, adjusting their strategies in real-time to meet the dynamic demands of the urban education landscape.

At SDN Murnisari, evaluation is less bureaucratic but arguably more personal. Formal questionnaires are rarely used; instead, evaluation happens informally, often during the distribution of report cards or at community gatherings. Teachers use these moments to gauge parental commitment and identify students at risk of discontinuing their education. The "follow-up" is immediate and personal: if a student is flagged as being at risk of dropping out, the follow-up involves a personal visit from a teacher or a local community figure to the family’s home to persuade and motivate them. While lacking in statistical data, this interpersonal evaluation mechanism is highly effective for the context. However, both schools acknowledge persistent challenges. Despite

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their different methods, both identify that information gaps regarding PPDB regulations and underlying economic constraints remain significant hurdles. Both institutions recognize the need to evolve their communication from being largely one-way (school-to-parent) to being more two-way and regular, ensuring that the partnership is a genuine dialogue rather than just instruction.

4 Discussion

The results verify that a planned, participatory, and contextualized school–parent partnership is a strategic lever for ensuring students' transition from primary to junior high school. There are four main points.

First, planning matters. When partnership is included in official school planning documents, it gains legitimacy, budget space (BOS, committee support, local donors), and continuity. This supports Fattah's and Sagala's arguments on educational management that program success begins with clear goals, mapped needs, and stakeholder involvement [7] It also resonates with Deming's principle that quality improvement must be designed as a system, not as isolated actions [12], [16].

Second, context shapes partnership form. Urban schools such as SDN Tegallega 1 prioritized academic preparation and PPDB literacy because parents had more access to information and higher schooling aspirations. Rural schools such as SDN Murnisari prioritized motivation, moral support, religion, and access facilitation [17]. This is consistent with Henderson and Mapp's finding that effective family–school partnerships are those that are "linked to learning" but also responsive to families' socio-economic and cultural circumstances [5], as well as OECD's observation that schools must adapt engagement strategies to local constraints to prevent dropout at transition stages [11]

Third, two-way and multi-channel communication is crucial. Both schools still had traces of one-way communication—school to parent—especially in rural settings. Yet Epstein, Hoover-Dempsey, and later UNESCO reports emphasize that parents become active when they (1) feel invited, (2) understand what to do, and (3) see that the school values their contribution. Strengthening WhatsApp groups, parent liaisons, and committee-based outreach can make partnership more substantive, not merely administrative [4], [18].

Fourth, evaluation and follow-up determine sustainability. SDN Tegallega 1 that conducted written evaluation could improve programs (more tutoring, more SMP visits). SDN Murnisari that evaluated informally could still maintain participation but had difficulty documenting progress. This difference confirms that monitoring and evaluation in partnership are influenced by school culture, resources, and leadership, as also seen in Indonesia's family-engagement guideline and in Simamora et al.'s model of school –parent partnership development [19].

The five additional references incorporated here—Epstein's framework, Henderson & Mapp's synthesis, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler's parental-involvement model, OECD's policy note on family–school–community partnerships, and UNESCO's more recent emphasis on parental engagement—collectively strengthen

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the argument that partnership must be designed, not presumed; supported, not left to individual initiative; and evaluated, not left undocumented [5], [20].

5 Conclusion

This study concludes that school–parent partnership strategies at SDN Tegallega 1 and SDN Murnisari contributed significantly to students' readiness and opportunity to continue to junior high school. Where partnership was (1) planned together, (2) organized with clear roles, (3) implemented through parenting, learning assistance, and intensive communication, and (4) evaluated and followed up, parents became more informed, more motivated, and more supportive—both morally and materially. Urban–rural differences did not negate the importance of partnership; they simply affected the emphasis: academic preparation in urban schools and motivational/moral support in rural schools.

Practically, schools should formalize partnership programs in their RKS/RKJM, operate two-way communication channels, integrate information on PPDB and scholarships into parenting sessions, and empower the school committee as a bridge to local government and SMPs. Policymakers should provide templates and digital tools for documenting partnership so that progress can be monitored. Parents, for their part, should move from passive attendance in meetings to active support at home—monitoring learning, motivating children, and planning finances for schooling.

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