



Exploration of Improving Teacher Competence in Teaching Indonesian Language in Junior High Schools in Rural Areas

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Abstract

The research analyzes the educational experiences of rural junior high school Indonesian language teachers by examining their teaching competence improvement barriers. A qualitative method enabled researchers to obtain data from classroom observations together with in-depth interviews and focus group discussions involving twelve teachers who teach at different rural educational facilities. Research demonstrates that rural teachers experience important barriers because they face restricted access to basic resources together with restricted access to professional development and technological support. Despite these obstacles, teachers employ various strategies for self-improvement, such as peer collaboration, online learning, and community support. Rural teachers receive essential help from neighborhood residents who provide facilities along with encouragement to bridge their educational deficiencies. This research demonstrates both the significance of nonformal professional support systems used by teachers as well as their ability to cope with their individual teaching situations effectively. Rural schools need both enhanced organizational backing and stronger community involvement to build teacher qualification levels which produces better academic outcomes in their areas. The study contributes to research overlooking rural education while providing concrete suggestions for authorities and education leaders to enhance teacher development in underserved rural regions.

Introduction

The process of education determines the future development of both individual learners and entire groups of people. The basic foundation for educational achievement depends on teacher competence because this factor directly affects instruction quality and student learning performance (Lindström et al., 2025; Karim et al., 2021). The Indonesian language education context needs teacher competence at the highest levels because the language acts as both a learning subject and a cultural identity and understanding tool (Machmud & Fakhri, 2021). The path to attaining high proficiency among teachers in rural zones faces multiple obstacles because of its constrained resources and deficient developmental programs for professionals (Shan & Aziz, 2022). The researchers examined how Indonesian language instructors' function in their rural junior high school educational setting. Describes rural areas of Indonesia through their geographical distance from main centers and their poor infrastructure networks together with their economic inequalities. Educational resources and professional development opportunities in the area remain limited due to poor conditions that constrain teacher

development according to Hennessy et al. (2022) The Teacher Professional Education Program (Teacher Professional Education) along with other governmental rural education improvement programs faces ongoing challenges according to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2019). Student learning suffers in rural schools due to limited access which teachers face to teaching resources, digital teaching tools and professional network connections needed for current educational methods (Dlamini et al., 2023).

Effective teaching requires how teachers develop their combined skills along with knowledge and attitudes and practices which enable learning (Benvenuti et al., 2023). Indonesian language teachers need to understand both linguistic and cultural content and innovative teaching approaches which accommodate students of various backgrounds (Prayogo, 2022). Rural teachers experience increased pressure from their work environment because they must deal with large classroom groups while educating diverse students with various abilities while meeting community expectations that might not support standard teaching practices. The resolution of these problems needs teachers to comprehend every aspect that influences educational practices in rural areas (Agustina et al., 2021).

The main obstacle faced by rural education is restricted access to continuous professional development which teachers need to improve their career progress. According to the literature good CPD creates better teacher competency through knowledge updates and pedagogical skill development and experiential activities (Alemayehu, 2021). Indian rural teachers face restrictions in CPD program participation mainly because of their physical access challenges and insufficient financial support (Singh et al., 2021; Mathew, R., & Madrunio, 2024). Local training solutions for teachers need development through approaches that match rural schools' environments because the current gap in training cannot meet their needs (Rachana, 2023).

Community backing for rural education plays a vital role in shaping the competence level of teachers. Schools and local communities enhance student educational success when they work together according to reports by (Mahoney et al., 2021). The formal educational infrastructure scarcity in rural Indonesia motivates local communities to step forward with essential teacher support that includes extracurricular organization and educational resource provision (Ciarla, 2023; Ssenyonga, 2021). Utilizing community-based resources represents a critical element for building sustainable initiatives which aim to increase teacher competence in rural regions.

Teachers working in rural regions of Indonesia show excellent adaptability and inventiveness when handling their career responsibilities. Research suggests that teachers use creative methods including local resource-based lesson aids and cultural storytelling methods to handle shortage issues in educational settings (Kononets et al., 2022). Excellent teaching in rural environments demonstrates its cultural compatibility through enriched learning practices which showcase the basic characteristics of effective education in rural communities.

The effort to improve teacher competence in rural schools follows the path toward reaching educational objectives both within Indonesia and globally. The Indonesian government sustains its dedication to SDG 4 regarding inclusive quality education by developing specific solutions for rural and marginalized populations (Sipayung, & Hsu, 2023). The alignment between strong teachers and reduced educational gaps coupled with enhanced social unity results from language lessons which serve as cultural and economic uniting elements (Handayani et al., 2024).

The study conducts comprehensive research to expand existing knowledge about teacher competence factors which affect rural junior high school learning environments. The research

explores Indonesian language teachers in rural areas to discover specific professional elements that influence language education during the development of their careers. The research goals to feed into educational policies and practices using practical guidelines which boost rural Indonesian teacher competence while enhancing educational success.

Method

Qualitative methodology served as the research method for studying the teaching practices and educational background of teachers working with Indonesian language in rural junior high schools. Qualitative methods were chosen because they enable researchers to understand all aspects of how rural educational contexts affect teacher competence. The research studied teachers' professional growth through examining educational resources in locations with minimal infrastructure since these areas remained the research focus. The rural educational environment allowed researchers to observe how educators adjust their practice while making use of available resources in their surroundings.

The researchers used qualitative exploratory methods to uncover in-depth information about teachers' personal along with professional backgrounds. The research design allowed researchers to fully comprehend the various social and cultural aspects together with educational background of teaching professionals thereby revealing essential competence-influencing factors. This research methodology aimed to research rural teachers' unique methods of handling scarce resources with weak professional development support when advancing student academic accomplishments.

Pursuant to purposive sampling the researchers selected Indonesian language instructors having three years minimum teaching experience within rural junior high schools. Twelve teachers from different educational institutions took part in the research to achieve diverse viewpoints. Local education stakeholders together with school principals joined the research to share supplementary information regarding the challenges and support structures found in rural educational settings. The research design produced a complete perspective about teacher competence factors by exploring teacher personal experiences as well as the support structures in educational institutions.

The research data collection involved using both in-depth interviews together with classroom observations and focus group discussions (FGDs). Semi-structured interviews served to understand the teaching approaches, problems and career enhancing strategies employed by teachers. The viewing of classrooms offers immediate access to study how instructors deliver lessons and run their classrooms which helped researchers understand the methods used for resource management and student interaction. Through FGD sessions involving teachers and administrators both groups could share stories about their experiences while finding mutual challenges. These research strategies enabled multiple points of data collection which improved the study's both reliability and the discovered depths of information.

Thematic analysis was used to study the gathered data which revealed repeated themes along with patterns. Multiple readings of the data provided opportunities for familiarization followed by a coding process of key concepts and phrases which then allowed theme creation from grouped codes. The research uncovered essential elements from educators' encounters which included their resource-conquering approaches as well as community engagement and obstacles in their access to professional training. The investigator supplemented data analysis through triangulation techniques to confirm cross-source coherence while developing an evaluated understanding of rural Indonesian language teacher performance obstacles.

Result and Discussion

The effectiveness of Indonesian language instruction in these areas is significantly influenced by the availability of teaching resources, access to professional development, and community support. While rural teachers face multiple challenges, they also demonstrate resilience by adopting innovative strategies such as peer collaboration, online learning, and leveraging local community involvement. These adaptive approaches not only enhance their professional growth but also contribute to improving student learning outcomes despite infrastructural and institutional limitations. The following section presents the key findings of this study, shedding light on the specific challenges and strategies employed by rural teachers to enhance their teaching competence.

Strategies for Self-Improvement Peer Collaboration and Online Learning

Rural junior high school teachers typically look to peer collaboration and online learning because they need different ways to improve their skills beyond limited external professional development resources. These methods function as essential elements for professional advancement which help teachers develop their instructional abilities and track educational developments even when their environment presents barriers because of being rural.

The development of peer collaboration stands as a fundamental training method used by Indonesian language instructors teaching in rural areas to achieve self-improvement. Educators from the same school and from adjacent schools regularly meet to exchange learning concepts and instructional methods and discuss teaching obstacles. Through mutual collaboration teachers develop greater community bonds and benefit from each other's teaching experiences. Within areas where professional development assistance is scarce teachers use peer support interactions to gain both professional development knowledge and emotional backing. Multiple interview participants discussed the significance of collaborative learning through mutual support between teachers for their best learning outcomes.

"I feel like I improve the most when I can discuss lesson plans and teaching strategies with my peers. They share techniques that work well in their classrooms, and I try to adapt them to mine."

Peer collaboration serves teachers exceptionally well because they obtain ongoing opportunities for reflection alongside learning experiences. Through such interactions teachers develop better instructional methods and professional support networks they can use for help and guidance. Teachers use peer collaboration for more than pedagogical exchanges because it enables team discussions about student behavior as well as curriculum adaptations and classroom management strategies. Collaboration between teachers leads to fresh ideas which solve their shared educational obstacles.

"When we work together as a team, we come up with creative solutions, such as using local materials for lessons or incorporating community-based activities into our teaching."

Online learning continues to become an influential method for professional growth since Internet access now spreads across rural areas. Teachers have opted for digital resources on online platforms to improve their competencies because these platforms offer free or affordable course programs. Educational platforms offer teachers updated educational practices together with modern strategies and best practices which traditional educational platforms typically do not offer. Online learning enables teachers to control their study timeline because they can

proceed at their preferred pace thus allowing professional development to align with their existing work routines. Through the study teachers confirmed that online learning proved beneficial for their practice of keeping up with modern educational movements.

"I often take free online courses in teaching strategies. It's been very useful in helping me implement more interactive activities in my classroom. Even though I can't attend workshops in person, online learning fills that gap."

The self-improvement prospects through online learning are essential but teachers who work in rural areas encounter difficulties with internet connections as well as digital literacy requirements. Several teachers have learned how to capitalize on online resources despite existing obstacles. Teachers resolve connectivity problems through offline material use after making material downloads during times of internet access availability. Teaching professionals demonstrate their dedication to personal skills advancement through their acceptance of new technological impediments.

"Sometimes the internet is slow, but I download the materials whenever I can and study them later. It's a little challenging, but I make it work."

Self-improvement occurs through the synergistic relationship between peer collaboration and online learning which helps teachers solve resource and external professional development challenges. Rural teachers gain empowerment through these strategies which enable them to evolve their classroom practices as well as their professional expertise. The integration of these methods helps teachers build a continuous learning environment in which they directly seek personal development opportunities to better serve their students. The integration of peer network interaction with online education systems introduces a viable approach for professional improvement that teachers working in rural areas can reproduce.

Limited Access to Teaching Resources and Professional Development

The numerous difficulties facing rural junior high school teachers directly affect their ability to enhance their competence while providing superior instruction to their students. Limited access to teaching resources along with professional development opportunities constitute the most critical difficulties teachers encounter. The combination of geographical separation and insufficient budgetary support creates obstacles which prevent teaching staff from acceding to their maximum potential or maintaining advancement in educational methodology.

Teachers from rural areas experience inadequate teaching resources as their main educational obstacle. Rural schools have to deal with poor fundamental school infrastructure consisting of obsolete books and restricted technology access and insufficient teaching resources. Outdated learning resources create barriers for teachers when they try to deliver dynamic educational experiences to students.

"We have very few textbooks, and those we have are outdated. Sometimes, we rely on printed materials from the internet, but they are not always relevant or of good quality."

Poor teaching resources create two problems in the classroom: reduced lesson quality combined with restricted teacher flexibility for innovative teaching techniques. Modern educational practices are at odds with rural schools since they lack reliable internet access and digital devices which prevent the adoption of contemporary digital learning tools. The restrictions prevent enthusiastic teachers from utilizing technological tools for their instruction.

"I would love to use more multimedia or online resources, but the internet connection is so unstable that I can't rely on it. We don't have enough computers or projectors for each class, and the few devices we do have are often broken."

quirrel or choose conventional teaching techniques since limited resources lead them to abandon more effective educational approaches.

Many teachers face difficulties due to scarce availability of educational development initiatives. The geographical isolation of rural teachers prevents them from accessing a diverse range of workshops along with seminars and training programs which exist primarily in urban education centers. Educational trends along with modern teaching methodologies remain out of reach for multiple teachers across rural regions.

"It's hard to find professional development programs here. We don't have the budget to attend workshops, and even if there were any, they would be far away, making it difficult for us to participate."

The instructor explained that school administrators often promote distance learning training yet many colleagues cannot pursue this through poor access to the internet or financial constraints. The shortage of professional development opportunities creates double effects by affecting both teacher competence and work enthusiasm along with job satisfaction levels. Isolation and disconnection from the education community in rural schools develops into frustration and burnout among teachers because of their geographical position.

"I feel like I'm stuck in a routine. There are no opportunities for us to learn new things or connect with other teachers. It can be demotivating sometimes."

This sense of professional isolation is compounded by the fact that rural teachers often work in schools with limited administrative support.

"Sometimes, it feels like we're on our own. The school principal is busy with other matters, and there's no one to help us with classroom management or professional guidance."

Rural junior high schools face various difficulties but their teaching staff discovers methods to continue teaching effectively. Proficiency and inventive abilities help teachers to handle limited instructional materials yet peer support remains informal for exchanging academic practices. The problems surrounding scarce resources and minimal professional development opportunities persist as key obstacles which prevent improvement of teacher competence in rural areas. Improving rural teaching requires national and local education institutions to work together toward providing essential resources and support which enable teachers to maintain educational quality.

Role of local communities in supporting teacher development

Local communities in rural areas take on an essential role because they provide essential support in educational enhancement for teachers because these locations lack professional development options and limited educational resources. Community involvement allows teachers to bridge resource deficiencies while creating a supportive learning environment that benefits both teaching staff and their students. The local communities maintain a beneficial exchange with their teachers to advance professional growth and enhance educational success among students.

Local communities aid teacher development through resource provision that the school could not access independently. Community members supplement lessons with materials and share local knowledge which teachers use to make student-relevant educational content. The relationship between teachers and community members allows educators to develop lessons which authenticate local traditions while utilizing cultural elements from the community.

"In our village, people are very supportive. They help us by donating books, materials, and sometimes even come to the school to share their knowledge with the students. This really enriches the classroom experience."

Teachers receive social and emotional backing in addition to resources through activities that directly engage the community. The local community stands as a crucial support network for teachers teaching in rural locations because they lack both professional connections and reside far from urban areas. The support teachers receive comes from sustaining positive relationships with community leaders and parents and associated members.

"The community is like an extended family for us. When I face challenges in the classroom, I can always turn to the local leaders or parents for advice and support. They are always ready to listen and help in any way they can."

The feeling of support helps teachers most in areas with limited professional development options because it boosts their motivation to stay committed to their work. Public communities serve to build platforms that enable teachers to improve their competencies as well as their educational knowledge base. Community leaders identify educational needs to which they provide training programs through local workshops along with seminars for improving teaching methods. These program initiatives adapt their strategies to rural teaching professionals to enable them to solve on-the-ground obstacles while enhancing their instructional approaches.

"Once a year, our village organizes a training session for teachers. It's not as big as a national workshop, but it's something that helps us improve our skills. Local professionals, like retired teachers or skilled craftsmen, often come to share their expertise."

By using this initiative education professionals learn to rely on community members' expertise to help teachers evolve continuously while establishing local ownership of school quality in the district. The participation of local communities enables teachers to obtain necessary cultural context so they can better improve their educational methods. The student population in rural regions composed mainly of students sharing the same cultural heritage gives teachers advantageous insights because local customs and challenges become clearer than textbooks teach. Teachers who engage with their community obtain knowledge about their students' social systems while learning about community traditions and individual learning patterns and educational requirements.

"Living and working in this community gives me an understanding of what my students need. Their parents are the ones who give me the insights I need to better teach them."

The information helps teachers develop specialized educational content which addresses the needs and cultural background of their students. Local communities play an essential role in supporting teacher development specifically in rural areas because they face minimal resources along with limited access to professional development opportunities. Local communities can build up their teachers through provided resources and emotional support along with skill-

building chances which otherwise would restrict teacher advancement. These educational programs led by community members benefit teachers in dual ways while advancing rural education programs to strengthen education delivery in vulnerable areas. The combined task of delivering quality education lies between teachers and their communities because this generates a connection that produces mutual respect and benefits for both groups.

"We couldn't do this without the support of our community. They are as invested in our students' success as we are."

This research investigated how Indonesian language educators in rural junior high schools manage their teaching while revealing their key obstacles along with their teaching resource usage. This research analysis adds important knowledge about rural teaching difficulties and local community educational support and resourceful teaching solutions. The research findings of this study compare to current gaps in the literature regarding rural teacher experiences as well as resource limitations and teacher development participation from the community.

The essential finding from this study centers on analyzing the unique obstacles that rural junior high Indonesian language teachers encounter at their schools. Research about teacher competence in urban zones shows extensive development (Howard & Milner, 2021) but rural educational studies remain insufficiently investigated. The existing research about rural teaching environments shows educators working in these places confront triple barriers which exceed what urban teachers experience in terms of resource constraints as well as professional isolation and minimal development resources (Rasyid et al., 2023; Popova et al., 2020). The research investigates the navigation methods teachers in Indonesian rural schools use to manage obstacles specifically during Indonesian language instruction.

Research reveals that the critical shortage of teaching materials including new textbooks and educational equipment and technology interferes with teacher competence growth. Research evidence indicates that insufficient resources in rural educational institutions cause adverse effects on teaching quality (Marongedza et al., 2023; Kashif et al., 2021). Teachers combat resource limitations by using innovative approaches and local materials to deliver education as they receive minimal institutional support from the community and school district. The teacher explained that staff depends on printed materials from the Internet but these materials often lack utility or demonstrate poor quality standards. This research validates existing knowledge about rural teachers adapting to challenges (Ma et al., 2021) yet demonstrates the need for organizations to provide enhanced support structures for teaching personnel in rural settings.

The current research fills a professional development void which exists among rural school educators. Steady professional development stands as an essential factor for teacher quality enhancement according to Burns (2023). yet teachers in rural districts experience restrictions in training participation because of geographical distance alongside monetary hurdles and institutional detachment. Studies show that professional development is essential for rural education but these programs mostly ignore the special challenges rural teachers encounter when seeking these learning opportunities. The existing literature on teacher professional development gets enriched through this study which demonstrates that teachers working in rural areas face professional isolation because access to workshops and training programs is limited thus creating stagnation in their career advancement.

The research established that educators depend on colleague interactions and community programs to address deficiencies in official professional development programs. Teachers undergo training sessions which the community organizes according to this teacher's report. In

comparison to nationwide workshops this local training event produces limited benefits but still gives teachers chance to develop their expertise. This research outcome supports earlier findings which demonstrate that informal networking with peers and peer support systems help rural teachers succeed. Teaching professionals in rural districts established homegrown programs for specialized professional training despite the lack of institutional programs. Rural teachers have established homegrown initiatives which show their ability to handle both teaching isolation and insufficient external training opportunities.

This study makes an important contribution by examining how local communities participate in the development process for teachers. Educational scholars have acknowledged the significance of community participation but research remains scarce about how rural communities specifically assist teachers. This investigation fulfills a research gap through its demonstration of how local communities deliver essential resources as well as emotional support and unsolicited training chances to educators. Community members from rural areas donate materials and share local knowledge and provide both emotional and moral backing to teachers which develops their professional competence. Our community plays the role of an extended family to us according to a teacher's description. Local leaders together with parent's function as sources who provide help and guidance during my difficulties in teaching.

Research about rural education benefits stands supported by these findings. The research presents incremental value to academic work as it proves rural Indonesian communities take part in helping teachers develop their instructional methods beyond traditional student support operations. Communities establishing reciprocal relations with teachers lead to better morale in instructors and deliver accessible informal training opportunities that become crucial in education settings without official resources. Teaching becomes more effective through local community involvement which enables teachers to deliver lessons that match their students' learning requirements based on regional customs.

Conclusion

The research has delivered essential information about Indonesian language educators in rural junior high schools which exposes their major difficulties with limited resources and restricted professional development options and workplace isolation. Teaching staff shows both determination and creativity by joining forces with colleagues while also relying on their fellow community members and independently studying to build their teaching ability. Educational quality requires strong community support for teachers which proves to be fundamental based on research results. An improvement in educational performance within rural areas depends on solving existing problems alongside built-up support networks which will create equal learning environments throughout Indonesia.

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