



Assyfa Journal of Islamic Studies

AJIS. Vol. 4 No.1 (2026) Page 382-395

e-ISSN: [2988-7399](#) p-ISSN: [2988-7399](#)



[DOI: 10.6160/ajis.v4i1.1058](https://doi.org/10.6160/ajis.v4i1.1058)

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Parenting Styles and Academic Achievement of Rural Students at SMPN 23 Bengkulu Tengah: A Qualitative Descriptive Study

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Article History: Received: 12 April 2026 • Revised: 05 May 2025 • Accepted: 15 May 2026 • Published: 15 May 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between parenting styles and the academic achievement of students at SMPN 23 Bengkulu Tengah, Indonesia, using a descriptive qualitative approach. The research aims to understand how parenting dynamics in rural settings contribute to student academic outcomes and to identify key inhibiting factors. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with parents and teachers, and systematic documentation of student academic records. Thematic analysis following the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020) framework revealed that parental involvement remains predominantly passive, limited to fulfilling tangible needs such as uniforms and stationery, while emotional and educational support—homework accompaniment, motivation, and self-confidence building—is critically lacking. Three primary inhibiting factors were identified: severe economic pressure that exhausts parental time and energy, low parental education literacy leading to academic self-doubt and abdication of responsibility to schools, and deep-rooted institutional misconceptions about the sole responsibility of schools for children's character and academic development. Despite these constraints, when present, emotional involvement showed a significant positive effect on student motivation. The study concludes that academic success in rural areas is more determined by the quality of parenting and intensity of parental involvement than by economic conditions alone. Sustainable parenting programs and consistent school budget transparency are recommended as key strategies to build trust and foster a synergistic school-family partnership that supports holistic student development.



ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji hubungan antara pola asuh orang tua dengan prestasi akademik siswa di SMPN 23 Bengkulu Tengah, Indonesia, dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana dinamika pola asuh di lingkungan perdesaan berkontribusi terhadap capaian akademik siswa serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor penghambat utamanya. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan orang tua dan guru, serta dokumentasi sistematis terhadap catatan akademik siswa. Analisis tematik mengikuti kerangka Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña (2020) mengungkapkan bahwa keterlibatan orang tua masih bersifat pasif, yang terbatas pada pemenuhan kebutuhan material seperti seragam dan alat tulis, sementara dukungan emosional dan edukatif seperti pendampingan belajar, pemberian motivasi, dan pembangunan rasa percaya diri sangat kurang. Terdapat tiga faktor penghambat utama yang teridentifikasi, yaitu: tekanan ekonomi yang berat yang menguras waktu dan tenaga orang tua, rendahnya literasi pendidikan orang tua yang memicu keraguan akademik dan pelimpahan tanggung jawab kepada pihak sekolah, serta kesalahpahaman institusional yang mengakar mengenai anggapan bahwa sekolah merupakan satu-satunya pihak yang bertanggung jawab atas perkembangan karakter dan akademik anak. Meskipun terdapat berbagai kendala tersebut, keterlibatan emosional menunjukkan pengaruh positif yang signifikan terhadap motivasi siswa apabila hal tersebut hadir. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa keberhasilan akademik di daerah perdesaan lebih ditentukan oleh kualitas pola asuh dan intensitas keterlibatan orang tua dibandingkan dengan kondisi ekonomi semata. Program pengasuhan yang berkelanjutan dan transparansi anggaran sekolah yang konsisten direkomendasikan sebagai strategi kunci untuk membangun kepercayaan serta menumbuhkan kemitraan yang sinergis antara sekolah dan keluarga guna mendukung perkembangan holistik siswa.

Keywords: *Financing Parenting Styles, Academic Achievement, Rural Education, Parental Involvement, Junior High School.*

How to cite: Siswanti, T., & Asmara, A. (2026). Parenting Styles and Academic Achievement of Rural Students at SMPN 23 Bengkulu Tengah: A Qualitative Descriptive Study. *Assyfa Journal of Islamic Studies*, 4(1). Retrieved from <https://journal.assyfa.com/index.php/ajis/article/view/1058>

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is inherently a collaborative process that demands a synergistic balance among schools, families, and the wider community. In modern pedagogical discourse, academic achievement is no longer seen solely as the product of teacher-student interaction in the classroom but as a holistic reflection of the multidimensional support students receive at home and beyond (Epstein, 2020). The family, as the first and foremost educational institution, lays the foundation for a child's character, values, and study habits. Parenting style, known in developmental psychology as a constellation of attitudes and behaviors, creates the emotional atmosphere that shapes student readiness and motivation (Mangesh et al., 2024). This study is rooted in the understanding that the quality of the parent-child relationship is a primary psychological factor influencing learning outcomes.

Normatively, the responsibility of parents in a child's education is a constitutional mandate in Indonesia. Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution guarantees the right to quality education, and Law

No. 20 of 2003, Article 7, explicitly states the legal obligation of parents to actively participate in their children's education (Republik Indonesia, 2020). This legal framework affirms that synergy between school and family is not just a pedagogical recommendation but a legal necessity. However, this idealism often clashes with the sociological realities of rural areas, such as those observed at SMPN 23 Bengkulu Tengah, where most families belong to lower-middle socio-economic groups (Sidauruk et al., 2025).

The challenges in rural Indonesia are well-documented. Learners in rural areas face multiplanar obstacles, including limited access to quality institutions, a shortage of qualified educators, inadequate infrastructure, and significant socio-economic barriers (Syafii et al., 2025). The disparity in educational quality between urban and rural areas remains persistent, impacting not only infrastructure but also learning outcomes (Mariyam et al., 2025). These conditions force parents to focus on meeting basic needs, often leading to what can be termed psychological absenteeism—parents physically present but unable to provide meaningful emotional and intellectual engagement. Studies from various rural contexts, including Bangladesh and China, have shown that economic vulnerability is a primary predictor of low parental involvement, which in turn negatively affects student achievement (Hassan et al., 2025; Sidauruk et al., 2025).

The dominant psychological framework for understanding this issue is social capital theory, as introduced by Coleman (1988). Social capital within the family includes trust, open communication, and consistent expectations, which are crucial for student success (Cupar et al., 2025). A systematic review of literature from 2020-2025 confirms that the authoritative parenting style, characterized by high warmth and appropriate control, consistently promotes better cognitive, emotional, and academic development, in contrast to authoritarian, permissive, or neglectful styles (Suarez Florian & Vega Vilca, 2025). Furthermore, a cross-national study by Cupar et al. (2025) found that authoritative parenting was positively associated with both grades and educational attainment, while authoritarian and permissive styles were negatively associated, with a country's economic development moderating these effects.

A significant research gap exists in understanding how these dynamics play out in the specific context of Indonesian rural junior high schools, particularly regarding the interaction between parental involvement, cultural norms, and institutional trust. While many studies have examined parenting and academic achievement, few have explored the unique inhibiting factors of economic pressure, low literacy, and institutional misconceptions simultaneously within a single community (Yulianti et al., 2023; Aprilia & Alfiasari, 2025). For instance, while Yulianti et al. (2023) found that Indonesian parents were more involved in home learning than school-based activities, they did not deeply explore the reasons for low school-based involvement, such as a lack of trust due to perceived financial motives. Similarly, research by Agung et al. (2023) highlighted that rural parents in Indonesia had a limited understanding of adolescent capabilities and relied heavily on punishment, but did not link these parenting practices to perceived institutional opacity. This study's novelty lies in its holistic, qualitative exploration of how these three barriers—economic, educational, and institutional—interact to create a self-reinforcing cycle of low parental engagement, which directly impacts student motivation and achievement in a rural Indonesian context (Jiang & Dong, 2024). The novelty also lies in its recommendation for synergistic, policy-level interventions that address both micro-level parenting practices and macro-level school transparency.

This research is of high urgency, as understanding these dynamics is crucial for designing effective, contextual interventions. The study is built on the premise that academic success in rural areas is often more dependent on the quality of parenting and social capital than on economic resources alone (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2021). Therefore, this article aims to: (1) analyze the extent to which parental involvement contributes to student achievement at SMPN 23 Bengkulu Tengah, and (2) identify the key inhibiting factors that prevent optimal parental engagement. The subsequent sections will detail the methodology, present the findings and discussion, and offer conclusions and recommendations for improving the school-family synergy in this and similar rural communities.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive analytical design to understand the complex social phenomena related to parenting styles and academic achievement in a naturalistic setting (Creswell & Poth, 2021). This paradigm was chosen as it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perspectives, and the contextual factors that shape their behaviors, which is not feasible through quantitative methods alone (Merriam & Tisdell, 2021). The research was conducted at SMPN 23 Bengkulu Tengah, a junior high school located in a rural area of Bengkulu Province, Indonesia, selected purposively to represent the typical challenges of rural education. The study focused on students, their parents, and teachers to capture a holistic picture of the family-school dynamic.

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques to ensure data richness and triangulation (Patton, 2022). First, participatory observation was carried out over three months, during which the researchers observed daily interactions between students, parents, and teachers in school and, where possible, home settings. Second, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 parents (selected based on varying levels of student achievement), 5 homeroom teachers, and the school principal. Third, documentation of students' academic records (report cards and national exam scores) was collected as objective performance data. The following table summarizes the participant demographics:

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), which consists of three concurrent flows of activity: (1) data condensation, which included selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting the interview transcripts and observation notes; (2) data display, where the condensed data was organized and presented in narrative form and matrices to facilitate conclusion drawing; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, where the researcher identified patterns, themes, and relationships within the data and then verified them through further data collection and member checking.

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, this study employed several strategies (Lincoln & Guba, 2021). Source triangulation was rigorously applied by comparing and

confirming information from the three different data sources: students, parents, and teachers. Furthermore, member checking was conducted by returning the preliminary findings to several key participants to verify the accuracy of the interpretations. The researchers also maintained a reflexive journal throughout the research process to minimize personal bias and document methodological decisions, thereby enhancing the study's confirmability.

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The analysis of the collected data revealed a complex picture of parental involvement, characterized by a significant gap between ideal practices and the reality of rural life. The findings are organized around three core themes: the tangible forms of parental involvement, its contribution to student achievement, and the key factors that inhibit parents from playing a more optimal role in their children's education.

3.1 Tangible Forms of Parental Involvement

The most significant finding was that parental involvement at SMPN 23 Bengkulu Tengah was predominantly **passive and reactive** rather than proactive and planned. The forms of support most frequently expressed by parents were tangible and material, such as purchasing school uniforms, providing stationery, and paying for daily transportation. One mother stated, *"My child goes to school, and I give him money. That is my duty. The rest is the teacher's job"* (Interview, Parent #7). This view was widely shared, indicating a fundamental belief that their role ends at the school gate. Emotional and educational support—such as helping with homework, discussing school experiences, or providing academic motivation—was reported by only a few families, often those with slightly higher education levels.

The observation data supported this, showing that very few parents accompanied their children during study time at home. In many households, children were seen studying alone or not at all, while parents attended to farm work or household chores. This pattern was consistent across almost all observed families. The following figure illustrates the distribution of the types of parental involvement reported by participants, highlighting the dominance of financial and tangible support over educational and emotional support.

This aligns with the interview statements where parents expressed feeling incapable of helping with homework. A father of a 9th-grade student explained, *"I only finished elementary school. I don't understand their math now. It's best if I stay out of it so I don't confuse him"* (Interview, Parent #12). This feeling of inadequacy, or low self-efficacy, was a pervasive theme and led many parents to abdicate their educational responsibilities entirely to the school, a decision reinforced by the demanding nature of their daily labor.

3.2 Contribution of Parental Involvement to Student Academic Achievement

The analysis showed a very strong and consistent relationship between the level of parental involvement and the quality of student learning outcomes. Data from academic records and teacher interviews revealed that students from families where parents showed even minimal emotional or supervisory involvement (e.g., asking about school or checking if homework was done) had significantly more stable academic performance and higher levels of classroom participation compared to students from families with very low involvement. Table 2 presents a comparison of student outcomes based on the level of parental involvement reported.

Table 2. Comparison of Student Academic Outcomes by Level of Parental Involvement

Level of Parental Involvement	Student Group (n=40)	Average Semester GPA (Scale 1-100)	Teacher-Reported Class Participation (Scale 1-5)
High (Active & Proactive)	10	82.4 (SD 4.2)	4.5 (SD 0.5)
Moderate (Mostly Tangible)	20	75.1 (SD 5.1)	3.8 (SD 0.7)
Low (Passive/Uninvolved)	10	68.3 (SD 6.5)	2.9 (SD 0.8)

Conversely, teachers reported that students who had to work after school, had unstable home environments, or were left unsupervised for long periods exhibited what could be termed *cognitive fatigue*. One teacher noted, "You can see it in their eyes—they are tired before the lesson even starts. They can't focus because they are thinking about the work they have to do at home or the younger siblings they need to care for" (Interview, Teacher #3). The student who is passive and uninvolved showed the lowest academic performance, with an average GPA of 68.3, compared to 82.4 for students with high parental involvement. The data underscore that even when financial support is limited, consistent emotional engagement and supervision can create a protective and motivating factor for students.

3.3 Factors Inhibiting Optimal Parental Involvement

The research identified three dominant, interrelated factors that systematically hinder optimal parental involvement, forming a self-perpetuating cycle of disengagement. The first factor is severe economic pressure. The majority of parents work as farmers, laborers, or traders, with long, unpredictable, and physically exhausting hours. A farmer explained, "I leave at 5 AM and come home at 6 PM. By the time I get home, I am too tired to think, let alone teach. I just want to rest" (Interview, Parent #1). This pressure not only reduces the time and energy available for educational activities but also forces many children to work, thereby creating a conflict between economic survival and educational investment. Several teachers confirmed that many students were absent during harvest season to help their families.

The second factor is the low level of parental education literacy. Many parents in this community only completed elementary school. This background creates a profound sense of inadequacy and self-doubt when faced with their children's increasingly complex schoolwork. This feeling of incompetence leads them to perceive that they have nothing of value to contribute. Consequently, they surrender all educational responsibility to the school, a phenomenon reinforced by the misconception that education is a technical process only professionals can handle (Aprilia & Alfiasari, 2025). Without the knowledge or confidence to engage, parents withdraw, viewing themselves as incapable partners.

The third factor is the deep-rooted institutional misconception and associated lack of trust. A significant portion of parents believe that the school is solely responsible for all aspects of a child's development, including character and discipline. This belief is compounded by a perceived lack of transparency regarding school fees and budgets. Several parents expressed suspicion that various school activities were designed to collect money for personal gain rather than for educational purposes. One parent stated, *"Every month there is a new 'program' with a fee. We don't know where the money goes, and we see no results. It feels like a burden, not a help"* (Focus Group Discussion, Parent #9). This distrust, combined with a narrow view of education as a financial transaction, creates a significant emotional and informational barrier between the home and school, severely limiting any form of collaborative synergy.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide a detailed illustration of the challenges in rural education, reinforcing and expanding upon the existing literature on parenting and academic achievement. The discussion will integrate the results with the theoretical framework of social capital and compare them with recent research to highlight the unique contributions of this study.

The finding that parental involvement is predominantly passive and material aligns with the concept of low social capital within the family, as described by Coleman (1988). When parents believe their role is merely financial, the crucial parent-child interactions involving expectations, monitoring, and cognitive stimulation—the building blocks of human capital—are absent (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2021). This material-focused involvement is a direct coping mechanism in response to severe economic pressure, a pattern observed in other developing rural contexts like Bangladesh and Nepal (Hassan et al., 2025; Galami, 2025). However, this study adds nuance by demonstrating that this economic pressure does not just *reduce* involvement; it actively shapes a specific *ideology* about the division of labor, where parents view themselves as incapable of any other contribution.

The observed link between minimal parental involvement and student cognitive fatigue is a critical finding. The concept of cognitive fatigue has been previously linked to excessive work and lack of sleep, but this study suggests it is also a product of emotional and motivational neglect. When students feel their efforts are unseen and unsupported at home, their intrinsic motivation erodes,

leading to a form of learned helplessness that manifests as difficulty concentrating (Suarez Florian & Vega Vilca, 2025). Teachers' reports of "tired eyes" are not just physical; they reflect the psychological exhaustion of navigating academic challenges without a safety net. This underscores that the home environment does not need to be academically sophisticated but must be psychologically safe and encouraging to foster resilience.

The first inhibiting factor, severe economic pressure, is a well-established barrier in the literature. Studies from rural China and Bangladesh have consistently found that low socio-economic status (SES) is a strong negative predictor of academic achievement (Jiang & Dong, 2024; Mangesh et al., 2024). The current study confirms this but emphasizes that the *pathway* of this effect is primarily through the depletion of parental time and psychological resources rather than just the lack of material resources. While government programs like BOS (School Operational Assistance) in Indonesia attempt to alleviate economic barriers, this research suggests that these measures are insufficient if they do not also address the time poverty and psychological fatigue experienced by rural parents (Sidauruk et al., 2025).

The second factor, low parental education literacy, leads to academic self-doubt and is a critical gap in understanding family-school partnerships in rural Indonesia. Agung et al. (2023) found that rural parents in Indonesia have a limited understanding of adolescent development. This study extends that finding by showing that this limited understanding leads to a specific behavioral outcome: the complete abdication of educational responsibility to the school. When parents feel incompetent, they retreat, creating a vacuum that schools are often ill-equipped to fill. The novelty here is the identification of this as a form of *psychological absenteeism* that is culturally reinforced by a deferential attitude toward authority figures, including teachers.

The third factor—the institutional misconception and lack of trust in the school—is perhaps the most novel and actionable finding of this study. While previous research has mentioned barriers like poor communication (Mariyam et al., 2025), this study goes further by identifying a specific perception: parents view school activities not as educational investments but as financial burdens for which they see no return. This lack of trust in budget transparency, often stemming from past negative experiences or rumors, creates a toxic cycle where schools propose activities, parents resist due to cost, and both parties become entrenched in a relationship of suspicion (Syafitri et al., 2025). This finding highlights a breakdown in what Epstein (2020) describes as "overlapping spheres of influence," where the family and school should be connected by trust and shared goals.

One of the most important contributions of this study is the identification of the vicious cycle of disengagement, as illustrated in Figure 2. This cycle begins with economic pressure, which leads to low parental literacy and self-doubt. This, in turn, fosters misconceptions about the role of the school, which breeds distrust and low involvement. The result is poor student outcomes, which further demotivates both teachers and parents, weakening the partnership and placing even more stress on the family to prioritize work over school. This cycle is self-reinforcing and provides a powerful explanatory model for why educational interventions in rural areas often fail: they typically address only one factor (e.g., providing scholarships) without breaking the entire cycle (Hassan et al., 2025).

The data from Table 2, showing a clear gradient in academic outcomes based on the level of parental involvement, even within the same low-SES context, is a powerful testament to the significance of social capital. This finding strongly supports the cross-national research by Cupar et al. (2025), which found that the positive impact of authoritative parenting was amplified in more economically developed contexts. This study suggests that in low-SES, low-trust environments, the *absence* of authoritative traits (warmth and supervision) is even more damaging to student outcomes. The relatively strong performance of students in the "High Involvement" group, despite economic constraints, shows that parental expectations and emotional support act as a powerful protective factor, buffering against the negative effects of poverty (Aprilia & Alfiasari, 2025).

The pie chart in Figure 1, showing that 67% of parental involvement was financial, is a stark visual representation of the skewed priorities. This is not a result of selfishness but a rational adaptation to a context where basic survival is the primary goal. However, a key implication of this study is that educators and policymakers must work to reframe "involvement" for these parents. The solution is not to demand more homework help, which they feel unqualified to provide, but to acknowledge and encourage other forms of support: verbal praise, consistent bedtimes for studying, asking about the school day, and communicating high expectations. These "low-cost, high-impact" behaviors can be taught through simple, non-academic parenting programs (Mangesh et al., 2024).

A major novelty of this study is its emphasis on school budget transparency as a foundational element for building trust and breaking the cycle of disengagement. The finding of parental suspicion regarding financial motives is a critical barrier that has not been extensively addressed in the parenting literature. As one parent mentioned, a lack of visibility into where fees go leads to resistance to all activities, even those that are free or low-cost. Therefore, building a successful partnership in a low-trust environment must begin with administrative transparency. Schools need to proactively share budgets and account for all educational funds, not just comply with formal reporting requirements, to transform the parent-school relationship from one of suspicion to one of shared investment. This finding is well-supported by the work on inclusive education policy, which emphasizes that community involvement and transparency are essential for building trust and promoting social equity in rural areas (Syafii et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the role of the school in facilitating positive peer dynamics among parents should not be underestimated. Peer parents' educational expectations can positively influence each other, creating a supportive community that reinforces learning (Hassan et al., 2025). Schools could facilitate regular, informal forums where parents can share strategies, successes, and challenges in a non-intimidating environment. This aligns with the concept of intergenerational closure, where a network of parents collectively monitors and supports the educational environment, building social capital that transcends the individual family (Coleman, 1988).

The findings also align with research on parenting styles during the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted the immense burden placed on parents, especially those with low income and education (Lase et al., 2022; Fitria & Pangesti, 2023). The current study suggests that the "new normal" has not fundamentally changed these dynamics. The economic pressures and educational disparities that were exacerbated by the pandemic have, in many ways, become permanent features of the educational landscape. The inability of parents to become teachers for their children, as

noted in earlier pandemic research, remains a persistent reality, reinforcing the need for sustainable, ongoing support systems rather than emergency, one-off interventions.

Finally, this study underscores the potential for technology to be part of the solution, but only when basic infrastructure and trust are in place. While technology can facilitate communication and provide learning resources, introducing it into a low-trust, low-literacy environment without addressing the foundational issues could widen the gap (Ngozwana, 2023). In this context, a simple, low-tech solution—such as a weekly SMS from the teacher to parents summarizing what was learned and what to ask the child about—might be more effective and accessible than a complex online portal. The key is to use technology not as a replacement for human connection but as a bridge to facilitate and strengthen the parent-teacher relationship.

The study also has important implications for pedagogical leadership. Strong, visionary school leadership is required to actively cultivate a culture of openness, to redesign parent-teacher meetings as non-punitive and participatory dialogues, and to champion the value of even small parental acts of encouragement. The school principal in this study, for example, acknowledged the problem but felt it was outside their control. A transformative leader would see the cycle of disengagement as a core problem to be solved through creative strategies, such as offering parenting workshops during evening hours or holding meetings in the village center rather than at the school. Thus, the kebaruan of this research is in its comprehensive, systemic view of the problem and its focus on the interplay between family actions, school policies, and community trust.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study has provided robust, empirical evidence that the academic success of students in rural areas is far more dependent on the quality of parenting and the intensity of parental involvement than on the family's economic condition alone. The core problem identified is not a lack of love from parents but a combination of economic pressure, low educational self-efficacy, and a breakdown of trust, which together create a self-reinforcing cycle of disengagement. When parents are forced to prioritize survival and feel incapable of contributing to their child's intellectual growth, they abdicate their role to the school, leaving students to navigate academic challenges without crucial emotional and motivational support. Consequently, students from families with low involvement exhibit significantly lower academic performance and greater cognitive fatigue compared to their peers from more engaged families, even within the same impoverished community.

Based on these findings, this study strongly recommends a two-pronged, synergistic strategy for schools and policymakers. First, consistent and transparent financial governance is non-negotiable for restoring trust. Schools must move beyond minimal compliance and actively communicate their budgets, showing parents exactly how funds are used to directly benefit students. This transparency is the only way to dismantle the suspicion that school activities are financial burdens,

transforming them into shared investments in the future. Second, schools must implement sustainable, non-academic parenting programs. These programs should focus not on teaching parents how to be academic tutors, which is a source of anxiety, but on building their confidence and capacity for "low-cost, high-impact" actions: verbal praise, consistent expectations, active listening, and supervision. These practical, culturally sensitive interventions, delivered through regular forums or leveraging community groups, can empower parents to reclaim their essential role as moral and emotional guides. Only by breaking the cycle of disengagement at both the administrative and familial levels can a truly synergistic and effective school-family partnership be built, ensuring that every child's academic potential is realized.

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