

Blame or cooperation: Understanding the views of rural parents and teachers

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Abstract

This study investigated home-school cooperation in rural Pakistan by comparing the viewpoints of parents and teachers. Thematic interviews were conducted with 12 parents and 10 teachers from rural public schools, and although some good experiences were reported, the findings revealed a pattern of denunciation and a tendency for external attributions – parents and teachers shifting responsibility to each other for inadequate cooperation. Teachers, though aware of the vulnerable socioeconomic situations of the parents, perceived them as uninterested and held them responsible for their children's poor performance, while parents criticised the teachers for their lack of professionalism, uncaring attitudes, and failure to treat them as equals. These mutual negative perceptions could further widen the gap between home and school, erode trust, and negatively impact children's education. Gender segregation and families' socioeconomic difficulties could also limit parents' involvement and prevent them from participating in school activities. We offer recommendations for improvements in both rural teachers' training and parents' roles in developing mutual understanding and relationships, which can benefit school development and ultimately the children's education.

Key words:

parents, teachers,
cooperation, rural school,
children's education

1 INTRODUCTION

Home and school are the two major resources that support children's education (e.g., Ma et al., 2024; Paccaud et al., 2021), and both play a role in fostering a sense of community that supports learning (Epstein, 2018; Goodall, 2022). Previous research on parent-teacher relationships has revealed that mutual trust (Hart & Bracey, 2023), effective communication (Yuen, 2011), shared responsibility (Anazia et al., 2025), and recognition of families' needs are positive factors in children's success (Pushor, 2007). However, although it is widely recognised that cooperation is vital to that success and to meeting children's educational needs (Cuervo, 2012; Goodall, 2021; Yulianti et al., 2022), the extent and quality of cooperation may vary due to socioeconomic, cultural, and societal structural factors (Ahmed et al., 2024). For example, in rural Pakistan – the context of the current study – families often face socioeconomic challenges that limit their ability to prioritise education and restrict their involvement (Jabeen et al., 2023). Research has also found that unstable family socioeconomic conditions and indifference from teachers can significantly discourage parents from participating in their children's education (Ali et al., 2021; Yulianti et al., 2022).

Furthermore, in many developing countries, there is a lack of systematic policies to promote schools' cooperation with families (e.g., Jabeen et al., 2023;

Jadoon et al., 2021; Kim, 2018). In Pakistan – particularly in rural areas – cooperation between home and school is less common due to a lack of school initiatives and to the parents' own socioeconomic challenges (Ahmed, 2023). Previous research also indicates that cooperation between home and school requires both teacher training that focuses on family engagement and families' understanding of the school and of the importance of sharing information (Bull et al., 2008; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Goodall, 2022). Unfortunately, insufficient attention has been paid to teachers' professional development in Pakistan, particularly in relation to home-school cooperation, while widespread illiteracy unavoidably hinders parents from effectively communicating with schools (Ali et al., 2021; Yousaf, 2019). To bridge this gap in knowledge of home-school cooperation, the current study samples the rarely heard voices of rural parents and teachers to compare and better understand the views of these two important stakeholders.

Attribution Theory for Understanding Home-School Cooperation

We chose attribution theory to help in understanding how individuals – in this case, parents and teachers – explain success and failure by making judgements about their own behaviour and that of others (Graham & Chen, 2020; Weiner, 1985). Such

disagreements often arise from differing perspectives or from judgements; for instance, teachers and parents may attribute different meanings to the same situation (e.g., cooperation, child's learning), which can produce blame or conflict (Bull et al., 2008; Jadoon et al., 2021).

The relationship between parents and teachers in child education is a form of social capital that contributes to the broader school community (Paccaud et al., 2021), and a crucial factor in the cooperation between them is the teacher's ability to engage in dialogue with parents on an equal footing and to recognise them as partners, which can help build trust and show that both parties are committed to the child's success (Epstein, 2018; Goodall, 2021). Cooperation, in this instance, is a relationship in which parents and teachers share an equal responsibility, listen to each other's views, and agree on how to move forward with the child's learning (Alanko, 2018; Bull et al., 2008). Their shared efforts not only influence the child's academic performance but also shape their social and emotional development (Anazia et al., 2025; Hart & Bracey, 2023). According to Ahmed (2023), holistic and enduring cooperation requires teachers to maintain open communication with parents, recognise them as partners, and guide them in how to support their children at home. However, while some educators have an encouraging perspective on partnering with parents (McConkey, 2025), others may feel discouraged due to previous unsuccessful attempts to engage with families or a lack of awareness about involving them (Yousaf, 2019).

Schools with transparent policies for dealing with parents tend to foster stronger home-school partnerships (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). According to McConkey (2025), parents' participation in their children's learning – both at home and at school – largely depends on the positive attitude of teachers and their support for parents. Parents need information regarding their children's situations, performance, and progress, which teachers can provide, so keeping parents informed about student evaluations helps them to support their children's learning at home (Bull et al., 2008). Research also highlights how teachers' welcoming and positive attitudes towards parents play a vital role in connecting children's learning at school and at home (Cuervo, 2020; Epstein, 2018; McConkey, 2025; Pushor, 2007). However, in Pakistan – especially in state schools – the teaching profession is characterised by low competence due to a lack of proper training and the use of outdated teaching methodologies, such as rote memorisation in place of conceptual understanding and the practical application of knowledge (Jabeen et al., 2023). There have been no significant reforms or corrective measures to address these issues, and teachers therefore often remain inactive and unmotivated in tackling children's learning challenges and engaging families in their education (Ahmed et al., 2021). This study therefore sought to investigate the views and attributions of rural parents and teachers regarding home-school cooperation in Pakistan to better understand the challenges, expectations, and factors influencing cooperation.

Study Context

In many developing countries, a child's education is overwhelmingly dependent upon the family's socioeconomic and cultural environment (Ali et al., 2021; Hasnat & Kabir, 2024) and comes at a cost that many families cannot afford (Ahmed, 2023). Although education at state schools in Pakistan is free, the

schools often lack resources and provide a lower standard of education than fee-based private schools; many parents therefore feel compelled to send their children to private institutions (Ali et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2018). However, in rural areas, where 61% of the country's population lives, low-income families often struggle even to earn a living, and they have no choice but to send their children to state schools, even while recognising that those institutions do not provide quality education (World Bank Group, 2017; Yousaf, 2019).

Rural education in Pakistan also faces several additional challenges, including infrastructural deficiencies, managerial neglect, and social and economic divides (Ahmed, 2023; Ali et al., 2025). A lack of facilities and trained teachers in many rural schools hinders access to education and impacts its quality, while teacher training programmes are often overly theoretical and do not reflect real classroom conditions (Jabeen et al., 2023). Furthermore, teachers' lack of specialised training in context-specific and sensitive pedagogy, including cultural and linguistic diversity coexisting with traditional norms, can complicate the educational environment and home-school cooperation (Ahmed et al., 2021). Teachers in rural areas also often have limited pre-service training or professional development and frequently lack the administrative support needed to effectively manage children and families (Ahmed, 2023; Siddiqui et al., 2021). Moreover, rural Pakistan is often patriarchal, with women oppressed in many aspects of life. These norms and inequalities can deprive girls of their right to education and limit the participation of parents – especially mothers – in their children's learning (Agha, 2018).

Aim and Research Questions

Considering the background and gaps in previous research, this study aimed to examine and compare the viewpoints and attributions of parents and teachers regarding the challenges, expectations, and factors affecting home-school cooperation in rural Pakistan. The research questions were as follows:

1. How do rural parents view their cooperation with the school in their children's education, their own responsibilities, and the possible challenges that hinder them in helping their children?
2. How do teachers in rural Pakistan view home-school cooperation, their own responsibilities, and the obstacles they encounter when engaging parents in children's education?

2 METHODS

This study used a qualitative interview method to gather context-specific insights into the experiences of rural parents and teachers regarding home-school cooperation in children's education (e.g., Goundar, 2025).

Data Collection

Thematic interviews were conducted with 12 parents of school-attending children and 10 teachers in rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) – a province of Pakistan. The parents were financially and academically less privileged – three had completed primary school, one had completed high school, and the remainder were illiterate – and comprised six mothers and six fathers between 34 and 53 years old. The teachers were from six different rural state schools and comprised five males and five females, all with at least three years of experience of interacting and cooperating with rural parents regarding their children's education.

The cultural norms of rural Pakistan mean that there is minimal interaction between males and females (e.g., Agha, 2018), and gender segregation is widespread, with separate state schools for girls and boys. It was therefore challenging for the male researcher to conduct interviews with female participants (UNICEF, 2024). To speak with female teachers, permission was first obtained from the district education officer; the school principal was then approached regarding the interviews, and only then were the teachers contacted and invited to interview. Similarly, when interviewing mothers, permission was secured from their husbands or in-laws before they were invited for interview. During interviews with the female teachers, a female worker was present in the room to help create a conducive environment and allow the teachers to talk freely. Similarly, when interviewing mothers, the interviewer's sister and niece accompanied him to assuage cultural sensitivities and allow the mothers to express themselves confidently. All informants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

This study was based at a Finnish university and followed the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity and the Responsible Conduct of Research and Research Ethics. Before the interviews, an information sheet was provided and explained to the participants, especially those who were illiterate, to help them understand the aims of the study and their duties and rights; a signed or stamped consent form was then collected. Interviews with the teachers were conducted at schools during their free time; interviews with fathers were conducted in fields and shops, while interviews with mothers were conducted in their respective homes. Special emphasis was placed on sensitivity, because the topic – parental involvement and home-school cooperation – could be emotional. Indeed, some participants displayed emotions – particularly the mothers – who expressed their powerlessness through tears, resentment, and sadness as they shared their stories.

The interviews were conducted in the national language (Urdu) and a regional language (Hindko) – which is widely spoken in the Haripur, Abbottabad, and Mansehra regions of KPK – in which the interviewer is fluent. An interview guide was prepared for both the teacher and parent interviews based on topics explored in the literature (e.g., Ali, 2021; Bull, 2008; Epstein, 2018; Hasnat & Kabir, 2024; Kim, 2018); the core themes and questions were the same for both groups, with modifications relevant to each. The interview guide encompassed aspects of cooperation, including teachers' and parents' views on home-school cooperation, communication between parents and teachers, participation in parent-teacher meetings, helping children with homework, the role of socioeconomics, and cultural challenges. All interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants, and the durations ranged from 32 minutes to just over an hour.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) was used, which emphasises systematic analytical engagement with the data when coding and generating themes and which entails systematic interpretation of the interviews. The process began with transcribing the interviews verbatim, which allowed familiarisation with the data and a deeper understanding of the context; the transcriptions were then reread to ensure accuracy. After familiarisation, codes were identified in the data; the topics were then organised and grouped to identify themes and sub-themes. The data from the parents and teachers were analysed separately and then compared – especially their attributions.

The analysis process produced three themes and six sub-themes. The study's co-author also supported the analytical process through discussions. As the data were collected in Urdu and Hindko, the quotes herein have been translated into English. To protect the participants' confidentiality, 'mother', 'father', 'teacher M', and 'teacher F' are used instead of names.

3 RESULTS

Three themes and six sub-themes emerged from the data. The first theme, attributions for poor cooperation, has two sub-themes – one from the teachers' perspective and the other from that of the parents. The second and third themes – emerging hopes of parents and teachers and sociocultural challenges – each have two sub-themes based on the combined views of both groups (see Tab. 1). These themes are broad, simultaneous, and intersecting, and many participants shared views on multiple themes during their interviews. However, despite some positive comments, both teachers and parents tended to attribute the lack of cooperation to each other and heavily criticised each other's conduct, with the socioeconomic situation and local norms in rural areas as further contributing factors.

Attributions for Poor Cooperation

Although the parents' and teachers' views reflect some signs of mutual understanding, they heavily criticised each other for a lack of cooperation and participation in the children's education.

Teachers: Lack of parental support

The teachers tended to attribute the weak relationship between home and school to parents' uncaring attitudes. They reported that parents rarely help their children with homework or attend meetings organised by the teachers and that, while the teachers communicate with parents regarding the children's academic issues, they receive little attention and few responses. The teachers explained that children often do not arrive at school on time and that their parents sometimes involve them in agricultural work, resulting in absences; when they contact parents about children

Tab. 1. Themes and sub-themes developed through data analysis

Themes	Sub-Themes	
Attributions for poor cooperation	Lack of parental support	Teachers
	Dissatisfaction over teachers' roles	Parents
Emerging hopes of parents and teachers	Growing sense of responsibility	Parents & teachers
	Role of the extended family	
Sociocultural challenges	Poverty and lack of education	Parents & teachers
	Gender segregation	

Source: Authors' elaboration

missing school for an extended period, the parents simply respond that their children will no longer attend school at all. One of the teachers expressed her concerns about the lack of parental cooperation:

"We invite all parents to attend parent-teacher meetings, but barely four or five parents attend. If we have issues to discuss with parents, we send them messages, but they do not come. Sometimes, they come to school a month after the notice time. I think parents here do not care about their children, what their children are doing, or where they go." (Teacher F)

The teachers also explained that parents may not be aware of the importance of education because they are often illiterate and thus do not prioritise their children's learning. Some teachers mentioned that, due to long-term absences, they occasionally contact parents who claim to regularly send their children to school to report that the children are skipping classes. Many teachers angrily reported that parents believe that enrolling their children in school is the end of their educational responsibilities and that, when their children fail exams, the parents then blame the teachers:

"The reason we have a lack of connection with parents is their lack of interest in children's education – or, I would say, lack of awareness about education." (Teacher M)

"Parents have to visit the school when we call them, but here in the village, they do not care. When we call [the parents] to come to the school so we can discuss issues, they often offer excuses: 'We have to do this; we have to go somewhere.'" (Teacher F)

Parents: Dissatisfaction with teachers' roles

In contrast, the parents tended to shift the responsibility for poor cooperation to the teachers; they said that teachers often fail to understand parental concerns because they do not treat them fairly. They explained that teachers favour those parents and children with whom they are acquainted or related. Some parents reported that the teachers often arrive late at school, raising questions about their professionalism, and that their children mention at home that the teachers are sometimes absent and thus the children spend the day playing. A few parents also revealed that some teachers force the children to do their own personal chores during school hours, such as bringing food or milk or delivering groceries to the teachers' homes:

"[In anger] I know one teacher who asked some children, including my son, to bring vegetables and eggs for them during school hours. I sent [the teacher] a message that children come to school for learning." (Father)

"Teachers in our village school give free books and copies to children whose parents are their friends or well-known to them. I have submitted an application two times for free copies for my children, but they did not accept my application." (Mother)

The parents claimed that the teachers send their own children to private rather than state schools because they know that the quality of education in state schools is poor. They also reported that teachers do not contact them to come and discuss their children's learning but instead to insult them. The parents expressed dissatisfaction and insisted that some teachers fail to attend school for many days and instead hire someone to take attendance but not teach the children:

"I know that the condition of government schools is not good, but that is the only option we have. Children sometimes come home with blank papers. I am

uneducated, but I can understand that [the teachers] do not concentrate on children's learning." (Mother)

Overall, this theme included significant clashes between parents and teachers, both of whom held each other responsible for the lack of home-school cooperation.

Emerging Hopes of Parents and Teachers

Despite claims of negligence and blame from both teachers and parents, their views reflected hope that a sense of understanding and responsibility may be possible and that support from extended family may compensate for a lack of cooperation.

Parents and teachers: Growing sense of responsibility

Some of the parents acknowledged that teachers sometimes communicate with them about their children's school performance through in-person meetings or phone calls. A few also appreciated how some teachers acknowledge their precarious economic situations as daily wage earners and understand their irregular attendance at parent-teacher meetings. However, the parents reported that only a few teachers show such empathy:

"[With sadness] In the beginning, the teachers called me and always asked me to come to school, but I explained to them that the house where I wash dishes does not allow me to have a day off. Now, [the teachers] care for my children, and if there is an issue, they call me and discuss it with me." (Mother)

Similarly, the teachers expressed hope and reported that some parents, over time, had begun treating the teachers' correspondence as important and showing interest in their children's education. The teachers mentioned that some parents have realised the implications of their own illiteracy and poverty and have started valuing the education of their children so that they can avoid the problems their parents face:

"In my class, many girls now come in clean school uniforms, which shows that their parents prepare them for school." (Teacher F)

Parents and teachers: The role of extended family

Some parents mentioned that, due to their illiteracy or work schedules, they sometimes could not help their children with homework. In such cases, they might ask an educated member of the family – such as the child's uncle, aunt, or cousin – to help with homework or visit the school on their behalf.

"We are illiterate and do not know about our children's books, but we want our children to study and live a better life. My husband's cousin is educated and lives near our house; our children sometimes go there to study." (Mother)

The teachers similarly described how parents sometimes send educated relatives on their behalf to attend parent-teacher meetings. Several mentioned that the extended support of relatives is very common in villages, particularly for childcare and learning. A few teachers also explained that some parents work in cities and their relatives help the children with learning at home.

"I know a child from this village who came from a very poor family. His father is completely illiterate. When his uncle, who is educated, realised he is talented, he helped him with his studies at home and supported his education financially, and, you know, in recent exams, he achieved the third-best position." (Teacher M)

Despite tensions, the parents and teachers showed some recognition of their responsibilities and

acknowledged how the support of extended family can play a positive role in filling gaps in home-school cooperation.

Sociocultural Challenges

Both the parents and teachers explained how poverty, illiteracy, and local customs can prevent parents from cooperating with the school. The parents discussed the impact of their poverty on their children's education, and the mothers and female teachers spoke particularly about gender segregation.

Parents and teachers: Poverty and lack of education

Some parents attributed the gap between home and school to poverty, reporting that poor economic conditions sometimes required them to withdraw their children – especially sons – from school to contribute to the family's income. They also shared that their unstable economic situations affect their ability to obtain learning materials (e.g., books, notebooks), which the teachers often warn their children not to come to school without. Some parents mentioned that, due to poverty, their children sometimes go to school hungry; they also noted their inability to help their children with homework or send them to an educated family member. A mother and a father both explained how their economic conditions affect their children:

"I cannot feed my children three times a day, and they walk quite a long way to school every day. [In tears] They often tell me they feel hungry at school. My children never demand anything from me because they know how hard I work to feed them." (Mother)

"I am in such difficult circumstances that sometimes I cannot even pay the school van fare for my children. Several times, my cousin has helped me pay my children's van fare. He also assisted my son with learning, as he is educated." (Father)

Teachers also acknowledged that parents' socioeconomic circumstances can hinder them from participating in their children's education. They noted that people in rural areas are generally poor and that, despite free state schooling, they sometimes cannot afford uniforms or the fare for the school van. A few teachers also revealed that they know parents who have withdrawn their children after the third or fourth grade due to poverty, sending them to work in the fields or in shops to help financially. The teachers also described how parents can be unaware of the importance of education due to their illiteracy and thus seem reluctant to engage with the school.

"Whenever there is a marriage ceremony here in the village, the children in the fifth grade come to me and ask me for a day's leave. They say they can work there as waiters to get free food and also some money." (Teacher M)

Parents and teachers: Gender segregation

The parents – particularly mothers – talked about the separate schools for girls and boys and how fathers are not allowed inside the girls' schools, while women must focus on domestic chores, limiting their ability to visit their children's schools. The mothers explained gender bias towards their children, with some revealing that they send their sons to private schools and daughters to state schools, with such decisions primarily made by a male in the family. The mothers also talked about the early marriage of girls during or soon after the completion of their schooling. The mothers – and one of the fathers – noted social insecurity and so-called honour as obstacles that prevent girls from getting an education in rural areas.

"My two daughters only completed primary school, and a few years after leaving school, I married them off, whereas one of my sons finished high school and the other is still studying." (Mother)

"Previously, all my children were studying in private schools, but due to our poor financial situation, it was difficult for us to afford private education for all of them. Now, my daughters are going to state schools, while our sons remain in private school." (Mother)

The teachers – especially the female teachers – were also concerned about rural practices that limit parents' – especially mothers' – involvement in their children's education. They shared how parents in villages believe that boys would repay an educational investment by staying with them after marriage but that girls would leave home. Some teachers also reported that some girls are withdrawn from school by parents who insist that they will be married in a few years or needed to help with household responsibilities.

"Once, I announced in class that tomorrow would be a day off, and one of the girls asked whether the private schools would also be closed. I said no, and she became happy. When I asked her the reason, she said that her brothers go to private schools but their four sisters are studying in [our] school, so they will play at home tomorrow while their brothers will be at school." (Teacher F)

Overall, this theme covered the socioeconomic issues and local practices that can prevent rural parents from cooperating with schools and participating in their children's education.

4 DISCUSSION

This study contributes to the literature on home-school cooperation by focusing on the viewpoints of rural parents and teachers in developing countries. The findings reveal a pattern of denunciation and a tendency towards external attributions for poor home-school cooperation, with both parents and teachers often blaming and shifting responsibility to each other for inadequate cooperation. The teachers were aware of the vulnerable socioeconomic situations of the parents but nevertheless perceived them as uninterested and held them responsible for their children's poor performance. Parents, in turn, criticised the teachers for their lack of professionalism, uncaring attitudes, and failure to treat them as equals. These mutual negative perceptions can widen the gap between home and school, erode trust, and have a negative impact on the children's education.

Despite recognising that parents can be very vulnerable due to illiteracy and extreme poverty, the teachers blamed them for being passive or unconcerned about cooperating with schools. This attitude raises questions about their professionalism and training, echoing the parents' concerns, and shows a lack of empathy, which can produce mistrust and a sense of superiority amongst the teachers. This attitude is also reflected in rural teachers choosing private schools for their own children. Previous research by Brinkmann (2018) indicates that teachers with inadequate training and professionalism can create settings in which they can exploit or intimidate parents who are academically and financially less privileged. Such abuse of power can potentially damage home-school cooperation, exacerbate social hierarchies, and increase educational inequalities (Ahmed et al., 2021). The findings also reveal parental shortcomings in cooperating with schools, with teachers noting that parents do not fulfil their essential roles but instead

believe that children's learning is entirely dependent on teachers.

The mutual blame for the lack of cooperation can create a trust deficit and increase the gap between home and school, but the distrust and blame shown in this study seem to be more than just a relational issue. The findings expose systemic challenges behind the blame, such as inefficiencies in administrative policies, poor accountability, inadequate school infrastructure, and the socioeconomic instability faced by rural families, which can potentially undermine the goal of socially just schooling. Previous research emphasises that, for a well-functioning relationship between home and school, policymakers and administrators should address the obstacles that limit the agency of teachers and parents in achieving socially just schooling, such that both can work together to benefit children's learning. (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2024; Cuervo, 2012; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Goodall, 2022; Yulianti et al., 2022). The interviews also revealed gender differences between the parents: Surprisingly, only mothers reported concerns about gender issues, as they themselves faced such challenges and were deeply worried about their daughters' learning. In contrast, the fathers – as part of a patriarchal society – did not speak about segregation or chose not to disclose such practices. Their views reflect the unbalanced power relations between males and females in rural society in Pakistan (e.g., Agha, 2018).

However, the extended family's role in cooperation with the school was an interesting and encouraging aspect. The gap in cooperation between home and school can be reduced by the collectivistic culture in rural areas, in which literate family members support children's learning at home and through visits to schools for parent-teacher meetings and other school correspondence. Research has shown that collectivistic culture and extended family can be valuable resources, especially for parents with limited education, helping to supplement their own role in their children's education and to compensate for any shortcomings (Ahmed et al., 2022).

Practical Implications

More rigorous policies and actions are needed to improve the educational outcomes of rural families. Teacher education in rural Pakistan appears to lack the essential training and skills needed to effectively engage parents in children's education – particularly a grounding in moral and ethical responsibility to help teachers to understand the value of their profession and of parents as partners in children's education (e.g., Cuervo, 2020). School administrators should also visit rural families to understand their issues and conditions so that strategic plans can be designed to address them, such as providing incentives for poor families to prevent child labour; free transportation to schools; free school supplies, such as books; parent-teacher meetings by mutual arrangement; and communication from teachers that does not require parents to be literate. This outreach should also encourage rural parents to share their concerns, which they might otherwise withhold due to factors such as self-esteem. Finally, schools and local community leaders could organise seminars and workshops for parents, in which raising public awareness of the importance of education is central – particularly for girls, who are often discouraged from continuing their education after primary school. This would also help parents to understand their roles and responsibilities in home-school cooperation.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. Data for this research were collected in Urdu and Hindko; the first author is verbally fluent in both languages but can only write fluently in Urdu, which was the language chosen for interview transcription. Similarly, the quotes in this article were translated into English, and some nuances of meaning may have been lost in translation.

This was a small-scale qualitative study, so the findings cannot be generalised, but they may be transferable to similar school environments in regions such as rural India and Bangladesh and other developing nations with comparable socioeconomic and cultural contexts. Furthermore, this study was conducted with rural parents and teachers, and similar research in urban areas might yield different results. In future research, quantitative survey methods could be used to gather generalisable findings on teachers' and parents' views on home-school cooperation and the barriers thereto.

5 CONCLUSION

This study offers a new understanding of the perspectives of rural teachers and parents on home-school cooperation as well as the shortcomings that lead to dissatisfaction, blaming, and a belief amongst both that the other is responsible for failures in cooperation. The study also found unbalanced power dynamics not only between parents and teachers but also between fathers and mothers. This blame and the unequal power relations are not due solely to teachers' and parents' reluctance or ignorance; underneath these conflicts lies a deeper systemic issue (Ali et al., 2025), including both institutional neglect and socioeconomic divides, which can create an environment in which building trust, meaningful collaboration, and socially just education become very difficult (e.g., Ahmed, 2023; Jabeen et al., 2023).

Although the discussion reveals a significant gap between home and school for multiple reasons, a fragmented sense of responsibility does begin to emerge, with recognition of both teachers' and parents' roles. Notably, families addressing the challenges of rural education through the collective responsibility of the extended family – whether at home or in schools – means that an educated family member can compensate for parents' shortcomings and provide necessary support for a child's education (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2022).

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