

ENHANCING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN MADAGASCAR

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how community participation contributes to enhancing school performance in the Atsimo Andrefana Region of Madagascar. Schools in this region face persistent challenges, including limited resources, low student motivation, high absenteeism, and socio-economic constraints, which affect learning outcomes and overall institutional effectiveness. A qualitative case study approach was adopted, involving 38 key participants, including school principals, vice principals, guidance counselors, teachers, parent association leaders, community leaders, local education office representatives, and student representatives. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis, and were analyzed thematically to capture patterns and insights across multiple stakeholder perspectives. The findings indicate that active community participation enhances student motivation, attendance, and engagement while contributing to a more supportive and organized school environment. Integration of local knowledge, such as cultural practices and practical skills, strengthened the relevance of learning and promoted collaborative problem-solving between schools and communities. Challenges to sustaining school-community partnerships included socio-economic limitations, geographic isolation, communication barriers, and gaps in teacher training; however, informal contributions and culturally grounded initiatives demonstrated measurable positive effects on student outcomes. The study underscores the need for structured and flexible strategies to maintain engagement, capacity-building for educators and community stakeholders, and institutional mechanisms that support long-term collaboration. Future research could explore the longitudinal impacts of collaborative learning ecosystems and conduct comparative studies across different regions to identify effective strategies for community-supported education in Madagascar.

Keywords: *Community, Collaboration, Learning, Madagascar.*

Introduction

Educational systems in many developing countries are increasingly challenged by rapid social change, economic vulnerability, and widening inequalities that directly affect school performance (Owan, 2019; Mashyaka & Ndayambaje, 2025). In Madagascar, these pressures are particularly visible in public education, where schools continue to struggle with limited resources, low student achievement, teacher shortages, and fragile institutional capacity (Emynorane et al., 2026; Lee & Hung, 2024). While national reforms have expanded access to schooling, persistent concerns remain regarding the quality of learning and the ability of schools to meet the academic and social needs of students (Sadat et al., 2025). These conditions require approaches that move beyond school-centered solutions and instead recognize learning as a shared responsibility among schools, families, and communities.

Madagascar's education system reflects long-standing structural constraints. Many schools, especially in rural areas, face overcrowded classrooms, inadequate infrastructure, and limited teaching materials (Emynorane et al., 2025). Teacher professional development remains uneven, and school leadership often operates under financial and administrative pressures (Kumar et al., 2025). At the same time, students are affected by poverty, food insecurity, and limited access to learning support outside school (Eric et al., 2025). These factors collectively weaken student engagement and contribute to low completion rates and uneven learning outcomes (Jailani et al., 2025; Yamada, 2014). Addressing such challenges requires strategies that mobilize local resources and strengthen relationships between schools and their surrounding social environments.

Within this context, community involvement has become an increasingly important element in discussions of educational improvement. Communities in Madagascar have historically played a role in supporting schools through volunteer labor, parental associations, and local leadership structures (Augustin & Emynorane, 2025). Cultural values emphasizing collective responsibility and social solidarity provide a strong foundation for collaborative engagement (Bashir et al., 2021). However, these practices are often informal, fragmented, and weakly connected to teaching and learning processes. As a result, their potential contribution to improving school performance has not been fully realized or systematically examined.

The idea of a collaborative learning ecosystem offers a meaningful framework for understanding how education can be strengthened through shared participation (Owan, 2019). Rather than viewing schools as isolated institutions, this perspective emphasizes interconnected relationships among educators, families, community leaders, civil society organizations, and local authorities. Learning is shaped by these interactions and by the broader social and cultural environment in which students live (Oktari et al., 2025). When schools and communities work together, they can create supportive conditions that enhance motivation, strengthen accountability, and improve learning experiences (Emynorane et al., 2026). This approach is particularly relevant in Madagascar, where community networks remain central to social life.

Despite the growing recognition of community-school partnerships, Study in Madagascar has largely focused on access to education, curriculum reform, and teacher effectiveness. The role of communities is often treated as a secondary factor rather than as an integral part of the learning process (Augustin & Emynorane, 2025). Existing studies rarely explore how community involvement interacts with school practices to shape learning environments. Moreover, few investigations adopt a holistic framework that captures the complexity of relationships within educational systems. This limited focus leaves important questions unanswered about how collaborative dynamics influence school performance in diverse Malagasy contexts.

The absence of empirical evidence on collaborative learning ecosystems in Madagascar creates a significant knowledge gap. Evidence from international study shows that community participation enhances attendance, lowers dropout rates, and improves academic performance, yet these effects cannot be assumed to hold true in Madagascar without localized examination. Social structures, cultural norms, and economic realities differ across regions, shaping how communities engage with schools and how schools respond to community expectations (Phuangsuwan et al., 2025). Without localized research, policies and interventions risk being disconnected from the lived experiences of students, teachers, and families.

This study responds to that gap by examining community involvement as part of an interconnected learning ecosystem rather than as an isolated variable. By focusing on how collaborative relationships operate within schools and their surrounding communities, the research provides a more comprehensive understanding of educational processes. Attention is given not only to formal participation, such as parent associations or school committees, but also to informal forms of support, local knowledge, and shared problem-solving practices that

influence daily school life. This perspective highlights the dynamic nature of collaboration and its role in shaping institutional culture and student learning (Domitrovich et al., 2025).

The originality of this study lies in its integration of the learning ecosystem framework with the Malagasy socio-cultural context. While the concept has been widely applied in higher-income countries, its relevance in low-resource settings remains underexplored. By situating community involvement within a broader system of relationships, the study moves beyond traditional models that focus solely on individual actors or institutional structures (Edwards et al., 2020). It demonstrates how schools and communities can function as interdependent partners in the co-creation of meaningful learning environments.

Furthermore, the study contributes new empirical insights by capturing the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, including school leaders, teachers, parents, and community members. This multi-voiced approach allows for a deeper understanding of how collaboration is perceived, practiced, and experienced at the local level. It also reveals the challenges that hinder effective partnerships, such as communication barriers, limited resources, and unclear roles (Emynorane & Arrive, 2024). These findings offer practical guidance for designing strategies that are responsive to local needs and capacities.

The relevance of this study extends beyond academic discourse. Policymakers and education practitioners in Madagascar are increasingly seeking sustainable solutions to improve school quality. Evidence generated by this study can inform the development of policies that promote inclusive participation and strengthen community-school relationships. School administrators may use the findings to design engagement strategies that align with instructional goals, while teachers can gain insights into how community support can enhance classroom learning (Essuman, 2019). Community leaders and parents can also benefit from a clearer understanding of their role in supporting educational success.

By framing community involvement as a strategic component of a collaborative learning ecosystem, this study emphasizes the importance of shared responsibility in education. It highlights how collective action can address resource limitations, strengthen school climate, and support student achievement. The study also contributes to broader discussions on educational equity by demonstrating how locally grounded partnerships can reduce disparities and create more inclusive learning environments. In a country where education is closely linked to social and economic development, strengthening these collaborative structures represents a vital pathway toward sustainable school improvement (Tadle-Zaragosa & Sonsona, 2021).

Through its focus on relationships, systems, and shared agency, this study offers a new lens for understanding how schools in Madagascar can enhance performance despite structural constraints. The insights generated aim to support the creation of resilient learning ecosystems that empower students, engage communities, and strengthen educational institutions in meaningful and lasting ways.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative case study approach to explore how community participation contributes to enhancing school performance in the Atsimo Andrefana Region of Madagascar, an area characterized by socio-economic vulnerability, limited educational infrastructure, and strong community networks. The study was conducted in four public secondary schools selected purposively to represent both urban and semi-rural contexts within the region, based on school size, accessibility, and observable levels of community engagement. Data were collected over a three-month period through in-depth semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis to ensure methodological triangulation. The participants consisted of a total of thirty-eight key informants, including four school principals, four vice principals for academic affairs, four guidance and counseling teachers, eight teachers, four parent association leaders, four community leaders or village elders, two representatives from the local education office, and eight student representatives.

from upper secondary grades. Interview guides were designed to explore perceptions of community involvement, forms of collaboration, challenges, and perceived impacts on learning environments and student outcomes. Observations focused on school-community interactions, parent meetings, classroom climate, and community-supported activities, while documents included school improvement plans, attendance records, and community partnership reports. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis through iterative coding, categorization, and theme development to identify patterns across stakeholder perspectives. Credibility was strengthened through member checking, prolonged engagement, and source triangulation, while dependability and confirmability were enhanced by maintaining an audit trail and reflexive field notes. Ethical approval was obtained from the regional education authority, informed consent was secured from all participants, and confidentiality was ensured through the use of pseudonyms and anonymized data.

Results and Discussion

Results

The study found that community participation in the Atsimo Andrefana Region significantly contributes to the development of collaborative learning ecosystems within schools. Key forms of participation included parents attending school meetings, providing material support such as school supplies, contributing to infrastructure maintenance, and participating in decision-making processes alongside school leadership. Community leaders and elders also played advisory roles, facilitating communication between families and schools and promoting a culture of shared responsibility for education. Teachers and school administrators emphasized that these interactions enhanced the learning environment by creating a supportive network in which students felt encouraged to attend school regularly and engage more actively in classroom activities. Observations revealed that schools with higher levels of community engagement displayed more organized classroom management, higher student attendance, and more frequent student participation in both academic and extracurricular programs.

The collaborative dimension of these learning ecosystems was further reflected in the alignment of school strategies with local knowledge and cultural practices. Parents and community leaders often assisted in contextualizing educational content, helping students relate academic concepts to everyday life and local livelihoods. For example, in semi-rural schools, students benefited from practical guidance in agriculture, basic entrepreneurship, and environmental awareness provided by community members. Interviews with teachers and guidance counselors indicated that this approach strengthened students' motivation to learn and fostered a sense of relevance between schooling and future career or life opportunities. Additionally, joint problem-solving initiatives, such as organizing school events or addressing absenteeism, reinforced trust and mutual accountability between schools and communities, which in turn improved the overall school climate.

Despite the positive impacts, the results also highlighted challenges that limited the effectiveness of community involvement. Communication barriers between school staff and some parents, particularly in remote areas with low literacy levels, constrained full participation. In several schools, limited financial and logistical resources prevented consistent engagement, and some community members lacked clarity regarding their roles in supporting school activities. Nevertheless, participants consistently reported that even informal or small-scale contributions, such as attending a parent meeting or helping maintain classrooms, had measurable effects on student morale and engagement. Overall, the study shows that when structured and sustained, community involvement in Atsimo Andrefana strengthens collaborative learning ecosystems, enhances student attendance and engagement, and supports a more conducive school environment, while ongoing challenges indicate areas for further development in formalizing and sustaining these partnerships.

Discussion

Influence of Community Engagement on Student Motivation and Attendance

Community involvement in schools emerged as a critical factor influencing both student motivation and attendance in the Atsimo Andrefana Region. The findings indicated that when parents, community leaders, and local organizations actively participate in school activities, students are more likely to feel supported and encouraged in their learning. Attendance records and observational data from the study suggested that students whose families engaged in school meetings, assisted with school infrastructure, or contributed to classroom resources demonstrated higher levels of consistency in attending classes. This pattern aligns with international study showing that visible parental and community support creates a sense of accountability and belonging for students, which reinforces regular school attendance and engagement (Maruyama & Igei, 2024).

The motivational effect of community engagement extended beyond physical presence to include active participation and learning outcomes. Teachers and guidance counselors reported that students exhibited greater enthusiasm for classroom activities and school-based projects when community members helped contextualize lessons with local knowledge and practical examples. For instance, students in semi-rural areas were more engaged when lessons incorporated agricultural practices or environmental activities led by community members. Such involvement helped students perceive the relevance of their education to real-life applications and future career opportunities, thereby enhancing intrinsic motivation (Eric et al., 2025). The findings indicate that community participation contributes not only to attendance but also to sustained engagement in learning processes, which is essential for improving overall school performance.

Collaborative mechanisms within the learning ecosystem, such as parent-teacher associations and joint problem-solving initiatives, further reinforced positive attendance behaviors. Schools that established regular communication channels between educators and community representatives reported that students were more likely to comply with school rules, complete assignments, and participate in extracurricular activities. This suggests that motivation is closely tied to the social environment surrounding the school, where students experience consistent support and encouragement from multiple stakeholders (Oktari et al., 2025). Observations of school-community meetings demonstrated that even small contributions, such as attending a meeting or helping maintain the school compound, signaled to students that their education was valued, which positively influenced their attitudes toward learning.

Challenges related to community involvement occasionally limited its full impact on student motivation and attendance. Communication barriers, particularly in remote areas with low literacy levels, reduced some parents' ability to participate effectively, and economic pressures sometimes prevented families from consistently supporting school initiatives (Jailani et al., 2025). Nevertheless, informal forms of participation, such as attending school meetings or providing minimal resources, were reported to produce measurable benefits for student engagement. These findings underscore that any level of community involvement, when recognized and integrated into school activities, contributes meaningfully to student motivation and attendance, reinforcing the importance of collaborative learning ecosystems as a framework for improving educational outcomes in the region..

Collaborative Learning Ecosystems and the Integration of Local Knowledge

The study highlighted that the integration of local knowledge within schools significantly enhances the functionality of collaborative learning ecosystems in the Atsimo Andrefana Region. Teachers and community members reported that contextualizing academic content with locally relevant examples made lessons more meaningful for students. In semi-rural schools, lessons incorporating agricultural practices, environmental management, and local entrepreneurial activities allowed students to see direct applications of what they learned in school. Community members often guided these activities, providing practical

demonstrations and sharing traditional knowledge that enriched classroom instruction. Such integration helped bridge the gap between formal education and students' lived experiences, strengthening the ecosystem's capacity to support holistic learning (Essuman, 2019; Lee & Hung, 2024).

Community involvement played a central role in facilitating this integration. Parents, local elders, and community organizations actively contributed insights, resources, and mentorship that complemented classroom teaching. Teachers emphasized that collaboration with the community allowed them to design lessons that were both academically rigorous and culturally meaningful. For example, guidance counselors noted that integrating local customs and practices into career guidance sessions made students more receptive to planning their future paths, as they could relate career choices to familiar societal roles and local opportunities. These interactions demonstrate that collaborative learning ecosystems are most effective when schools leverage the knowledge, skills, and experiences present within their communities (Phuangsuwan et al., 2025).

The collaborative model also encouraged the co-creation of knowledge between students, teachers, and community members. Observations and interviews revealed that participatory projects, such as community-led environmental initiatives or student-led agricultural experiments, fostered experiential learning while reinforcing the value of local expertise. Students reported feeling more engaged when they could contribute their observations and ideas to projects that reflected their immediate environment. Teachers highlighted that these projects encouraged critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork, suggesting that embedding local knowledge in learning activities promotes not only cognitive development but also social and emotional skills. The integration of local knowledge thus became a defining feature of the collaborative learning ecosystem, where shared participation enhanced both learning quality and community ownership of education (Owan, 2019; Emynorane et al., 2025).

The study also noted variations in the extent of local knowledge integration across schools. Urban schools tended to incorporate fewer local examples due to the weaker presence of traditional practices and less direct interaction with community members, whereas semi-rural schools benefited from more active collaboration. Challenges included limited teacher training in culturally responsive pedagogy and occasional resistance from community members unfamiliar with formal educational structures (Oktari et al., 2025). Despite these limitations, all participating schools demonstrated that even partial integration of local knowledge contributed positively to student engagement, motivation, and learning relevance. The findings indicate that collaborative learning ecosystems are strengthened when schools actively leverage the unique resources, experiences, and expertise available within their communities, creating learning environments that are both contextually grounded and pedagogically effective (Edwards et al., 2025).

Challenges and Opportunities in Sustaining School-Community Partnerships

Sustaining effective partnerships between schools and communities in the Atsimo Andrefana Region presents both significant opportunities and notable challenges. The study revealed that collaborative engagement enhances school performance, fosters student motivation, and strengthens local ownership of education. However, several structural and socio-economic factors influence the consistency and effectiveness of these partnerships. Schools with strong leadership and clear communication mechanisms were more successful in maintaining ongoing community involvement, while those lacking organized strategies faced intermittent support and limited participation from parents and local leaders (Bashir et al., 2025). The findings highlight that sustaining partnerships requires deliberate planning, clear role definition, and continuous interaction between schools and their communities (Emynorane et al., 2026).

Socio-economic constraints represent one of the main challenges to sustained collaboration. Many families in the region face financial hardships, which limit their ability to

provide material support or participate actively in school activities. Parents often prioritize labor and household responsibilities over attending meetings or assisting with school initiatives. Geographic isolation and transportation difficulties in rural areas further reduce access to school events, constraining participation. These conditions indicate that community engagement cannot be assumed to occur naturally; it must be facilitated through flexible strategies that account for local realities, including scheduling meetings at convenient times and integrating low-cost or informal forms of support (Domitrovich et al., 2025).

Communication and capacity-related challenges also affect the longevity of partnerships. Some parents and community members have low literacy levels or limited familiarity with formal education structures, which can create misunderstandings or reduce confidence in participating. Teachers may also lack training in community engagement or culturally responsive pedagogy, limiting their ability to harness local knowledge effectively. Observations from the study suggested that schools with regular consultation meetings, workshops, and clear feedback mechanisms were better able to overcome these barriers. These experiences underscore the importance of capacity-building initiatives for both educators and community stakeholders, ensuring that all participants understand their roles and can contribute meaningfully to the partnership (Essuman, 2019).

The study also identified significant opportunities for sustaining school-community collaboration. Informal contributions, such as attending a parent meeting, participating in school maintenance, or sharing practical knowledge, were reported to improve student engagement and overall school climate. Schools that integrated local traditions, expertise, and cultural practices into learning activities observed higher levels of mutual trust and a sense of shared responsibility among stakeholders (Tadle-Zaragosa & Sonsona, 2021). Establishing structured frameworks, such as parent associations or community advisory boards, can further institutionalize participation and ensure continuity over time (Yamada, 2014). Overall, the study suggests that strategic approaches combining formal structures, flexible participation mechanisms, and culturally responsive practices can transform school-community partnerships into sustainable and impactful components of collaborative learning ecosystems in Madagascar.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that community participation plays a crucial role in enhancing school performance in the Atsimo Andrefana Region of Madagascar. Active participation from parents, community leaders, and local organizations contributes to improved student motivation, higher attendance, and a more supportive learning environment, while the integration of local knowledge into school activities fosters meaningful learning experiences and greater relevance between academic content and students' daily lives. Collaborative mechanisms such as parent-teacher associations, advisory boards, and joint problem-solving initiatives reinforce trust and shared responsibility, further supporting institutional effectiveness. However, challenges including socio-economic constraints, geographic isolation, limited literacy among some community members, and gaps in teacher training highlight the need for structured strategies to sustain engagement. Based on these findings, schools and policymakers are encouraged to develop flexible participation frameworks that accommodate local realities, provide capacity-building opportunities for educators and community stakeholders, and institutionalize mechanisms for continuous collaboration. Encouraging informal and culturally grounded contributions can also reinforce engagement and promote a sense of ownership among all participants. For further study, longitudinal research could examine the long-term impacts of community involvement on student learning outcomes, while comparative studies across different regions of Madagascar would help identify context-specific strategies and best practices. Overall, the study underscores that fostering sustainable school-community partnerships is essential for creating resilient, high-performing, and contextually relevant learning ecosystems in Madagascar.

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