International Journal of Travel, Hospitality and Events
https://journal.polteksahid.ac.id/index.php/ijothe
E-ISSN: 2828-2590, P-ISSN: 2828-5093
Pages: 114-127

OPTIMIZING SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED ENGLISH EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF BERABAN ENGLISH CLUB AT NUANU SOCIAL FUND

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Article Info

Keywords:
Social engagement; Community-based English education; Experiential learning; Participatory action research; Youth development; Rural communities.

Received:
November 24, 2025
Approved:
January 19, 2026
Published:
January 31, 2026

Abstract

This study examines how social engagement is formed and sustained within a community-based English education program implemented by the Nuanu Social Fund in Beraban Village, Bali. Designed as a mixed-methods participatory action research case study, the research explores how behavioral, emotional, and relational dimensions of engagement interact in shaping learning processes and outcomes. Data were collected through participatory observation, pre- and post-program English assessments, semi-structured interviews, and attendance records involving seven active youth participants from Karang Taruna GAPERA. Quantitative analysis showed measurable improvement in English proficiency across the program period. However, qualitative evidence revealed more substantial changes in the quality of participants' communicative competence, including increased confidence, willingness to speak, and ability to use English in socially meaningful contexts. Although attendance fluctuated due to religious, family, and communal obligations, emotional and relational engagement among active participants remained strong, enabling learning to continue despite inconsistent behavioral participation. The findings contribute to the literature on experiential learning and community-based education by demonstrating that emotional and relational engagement function as key mediating mechanisms between instructional activities and learning outcomes in culturally embedded rural settings. Methodologically, the study highlights the value of participatory action research for generating both practical and theoretical insights from small-scale community interventions. Overall, the research offers a theoretically grounded model for designing community-based English programs that support youth development and sustainable social impact.

How to cite:
Prakoso, G. A., Pratama, I. W. A., & Iskandar, Z. D. (2026). Optimizing social engagement through community-based English education: A case study of Beraban English Club at Nuanu Social Fund. *International Journal of Travel, Hospitality and Events, 5*(1), 114–127.
https://doi.org/10.56743/ijothe.v5i1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Research Objectives

Social engagement has emerged as a pivotal mechanism for driving sustainable social change in Indonesia, particularly through community empowerment programs, micro-enterprise development, and cross-cultural synergies (Wu et al., 2025). Social engagement represents a critical factor in fostering closer relationships between program participants and their communities while increasing active community participation. When individuals feel genuinely engaged in social activities, they typically demonstrate heightened sense of belonging toward their communities and increased motivation to participate in future social initiatives (Xanthopoulou & Sahinidis, 2025). This phenomenon creates cascading effects that strengthen social cohesion and collective action at the community level.

In the context of rural Indonesia, particularly in village settings such as Beraban in Tabanan, Bali, low English proficiency among youth represents a significant barrier to economic participation and global engagement. According to the Education First English Proficiency Index (as cited in Republika Online, June 12, 2020), Indonesia ranked 51st among 88 countries globally, with proficiency scores of 51.58 out of 100, falling below the Asia-Pacific regional average of 53.94. This proficiency gap is further exacerbated in rural communities, where access to quality English education remains severely limited. Atsuyama (2008) attributes low English competency levels among Indonesian youth to insufficiently supportive educational programs and low individual motivation for engaging in consistent language learning practices. The intersection of these challenges low proficiency and limited educational access necessitates innovative, community-embedded approaches to youth capacity building.

Recognizing these interconnected challenges, Nuanu Social Fund, a community-based organization dedicated to social, environmental, and cultural empowerment, initiated the Beraban English Club program targeting youth members of Karang Taruna GAPERA (Gabungan Pemuda Beraban) in Beraban Village, Tabanan, Bali. The program emerged from strategic collaboration between NSF and the local youth organization, drawing on established trust relationships and shared commitment to community development. The initiative represents an attempt to simultaneously address youth language deficiency while cultivating deeper social engagement within the community context.

Literature Review: Social Engagement in Community Learning

In educational and community development literature, social engagement is analytically different from both participation and learning outcomes. Participation refers to physical or procedural involvement, such as attending sessions or registering for a program, whereas learning outcomes represent changes in knowledge or skills that can be measured through assessments. Social engagement, by contrast, concerns how individuals become socially and psychologically involved in learning and community interaction processes (Ting et al., 2025; Williams & Garcia, 2023).

Scholars increasingly describe social engagement as a multidimensional construct rather than a single observable behavior. In community and educational settings, it typically consists of three interrelated dimensions. Behavioral engagement reflects visible involvement, including attendance, active participation in activities, and responsiveness during

learning tasks. Emotional engagement refers to internal states such as interest, enjoyment, confidence, and the feeling of being valued within the group. Relational engagement captures the quality of social connections formed through interaction with peers, facilitators, and the surrounding community (Eaton et al., 2025; Nummelin et al., 2025).

These dimensions do not always develop at the same pace. In community-based programs, especially those embedded in strong cultural and social traditions, individuals may experience restrictions on attendance or punctuality without necessarily losing motivation or emotional attachment to the program. In such contexts, participants who are able to attend often demonstrate strong emotional commitment and social connectedness, which can sustain meaningful learning and social impact even when overall participation rates fluctuate.

Empirical studies support the central role of emotional and relational engagement in community learning. Ting et al. (2025) showed that young people's motivation and continued involvement are more strongly influenced by their sense of belonging and peer relationships than by simple frequency of attendance. Likewise, Williams and Garcia (2023) found that community initiatives that foster trust, collaboration, and interpersonal connection are more likely to generate long-term engagement and positive developmental outcomes.

Despite these insights, research on community-based English education in rural settings rarely distinguishes clearly between participation, engagement, and learning outcomes. Most studies focus on attendance or test scores without examining the underlying social and emotional processes that shape them. This study contributes to the literature by applying a multidimensional understanding of social engagement behavioral, emotional, and relational to analyze how community-based English learning can simultaneously support language development and social cohesion in a culturally embedded rural environment.

Theoretical Framework: Experiential Learning Theory

The theoretical foundation for this study draws from Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), which conceptualizes effective learning through a cyclical progression comprising four interconnected stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Within social engagement contexts, participants experience direct social interaction, articulate reflections on their experiences, develop deeper community understanding, and subsequently apply acquired knowledge to intensified future social engagement.

Kolb's theory emphasizes that meaningful learning requires active participation and direct experience (Karadayı & Gencel, 2024), rendering it particularly relevant for the Beraban English Club context. Rather than limiting learning to theoretical language instruction, the program intentionally positioned participants within supportive social environments enabling direct language practice and peer interaction. This experiential approach facilitates simultaneous development of communication competencies, social relationship strengthening, and confidence building in English use within quotidian contexts.

Research Problem and Significance

The central research question guiding this investigation concerns how social engagement optimization through participatory, community-based pedagogical approaches can simultaneously enhance youth English proficiency and strengthen community social

cohesion in rural settings. This inquiry addresses the overarching objective of understanding whether community-embedded educational social events can effectively combine language skill development with sustainable community social impact.

METHODS

This study adopted a mixed-methods case study design informed by a participatory action research (PAR) orientation. The research combined qualitative exploration of social engagement processes with quantitative measurement of learning outcomes in order to capture both experiential and performance-based dimensions of the program.

The case study approach was selected because the Beraban English Club represents a bounded, real-life community intervention situated within a specific social and cultural context. At the same time, the research was action-oriented, as the program was intentionally designed not only to observe social engagement but also to actively enhance it through pedagogical and motivational strategies implemented during the intervention period. This dual objective aligns with the principles of participatory action research, which emphasizes cyclical processes of planning, action, observation, and reflection within community-based settings.

The researcher's role as both program facilitator and field observer further reinforces the PAR character of the study. Through direct involvement in instructional activities, the researcher was able to document engagement dynamics, respond to participation challenges, and implement adaptive strategies in real time, while simultaneously collecting systematic data for analysis. This insider position enabled a deeper understanding of how social engagement emerged and evolved within the community learning environment.

The study was conducted in Beraban Village, Kediri District, Tabanan Regency, Bali, Indonesia, which serves as the operational base for Nuanu Social Fund's community programs. The Beraban English Club was implemented over an eight-session period from 16 May to 2 July 2025, providing a structured yet flexible setting for observing changes in participation, social interaction, and English learning outcomes among village youth.

Study Population and Sample

The study involved youth members aged 18–35 years affiliated with Karang Taruna GAPERA, the official community youth organization in Beraban Village. Participant recruitment was conducted in collaboration with Nuanu Social Fund and Karang Taruna leadership using purposive sampling, targeting individuals who expressed interest and motivation to improve their English communication skills within a community learning setting.

Nine participants initially enrolled in the program; however, two withdrew during the implementation phase due to competing family and community responsibilities, resulting in seven active participants who completed the full learning cycle and final assessment. Within the context of this study, the resulting sample size is appropriate because the research was designed as a participatory action research–oriented case study, in which the goal is to obtain in-depth understanding of learning and engagement processes within a bounded community rather than to achieve statistical representativeness.

The small sample enabled continuous observation, repeated interaction, and detailed documentation of individual learning trajectories and social engagement dynamics across multiple sessions. Furthermore, the evaluation of English proficiency relied on within-participant pre-test and post-test comparisons, allowing each participant to serve as their own reference point. This approach provides sufficient sensitivity to detect learning improvement despite the limited number of participants, particularly in a pilot-scale, community-based intervention.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using multiple complementary methods in order to capture both learning outcomes and social engagement processes within the community-based intervention. This multi-source strategy aligns with the mixed-methods and participatory action research orientation of the study.

Participatory observation was conducted throughout all eight sessions of the Beraban English Club. The researcher was directly involved in facilitating learning activities while simultaneously documenting patterns of attendance, interaction, communication behavior, and changes in participant confidence. Field notes were recorded after each session to capture both observable behaviors and reflective insights related to engagement dynamics.

English proficiency assessment was administered through online pre-tests and final-tests using the Wayground platform. These instruments provided quantitative evidence of changes in vocabulary, basic grammar, and conversational comprehension over the duration of the program. Pre-test scores established baseline proficiency, while final-test scores measured learning gains following the experiential learning intervention.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants, Karang Taruna representatives, and Nuanu Social Fund staff. These interviews explored perceptions of learning effectiveness, participant motivation, social interaction, and perceived community impact. The interviews allowed participants to articulate their experiences in their own terms, thereby supporting the interpretive depth required in participatory research.

Attendance records and activity documentation were maintained for all sessions. These records enabled the analysis of behavioral engagement patterns and provided contextual data for interpreting fluctuations in participation.

In accordance with the participatory action research approach, the researcher assumed a dual role as both program facilitator and field investigator. This position allowed the researcher to engage directly with participants, implement adaptive teaching and motivational strategies in response to emerging challenges, and observe social and learning processes from within the community context.

To mitigate potential bias arising from this insider role, data were collected through multiple sources, including standardized test results, attendance records, and participant interviews, allowing for triangulation between observed behavior, measured outcomes, and participant perspectives. Reflective field notes were also used to document the researcher's interpretations and to maintain analytical transparency throughout the research process.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a mixed-methods framework that integrated quantitative assessment of English proficiency with qualitative interpretation of social engagement and learning experiences. This approach enabled the study to capture both measurable learning outcomes and the contextual processes through which they emerged.

Quantitative data from the pre-test and final-test were analyzed using within-participant comparison. Individual scores were compared across the two measurement points to calculate absolute and percentage improvements in English proficiency. Group-level mean scores were then derived to summarize overall learning progress among the participants. This approach is appropriate for small-sample, intervention-based studies in which each participant functions as their own baseline.

Attendance records were compiled to generate descriptive statistics on session participation. These data were used as indicators of behavioral engagement and to identify patterns of fluctuation across the program period.

Qualitative data from participatory observation and semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. Field notes and interview transcripts were reviewed repeatedly to identify recurring patterns related to emotional engagement (e.g., confidence, motivation, willingness to speak), relational engagement (e.g., peer interaction, facilitator–participant relationships), and contextual constraints affecting participation. Codes were generated inductively and then grouped into broader themes reflecting the multidimensional nature of social engagement.

In line with the participatory action research orientation, the analysis also incorporated reflective interpretation of how engagement strategies implemented during the program influenced subsequent participation and learning outcomes. Triangulation across observation, interview data, attendance records, and test results was used to enhance analytical credibility and to ensure that interpretations were supported by multiple sources of evidence.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Behavioral Engagement: Participation Patterns

Across the eight sessions of the Beraban English Club, behavioral engagement as reflected in session attendance showed considerable fluctuation. While nine participants initially registered, seven completed the full program, with attendance temporarily declining during the middle phase of implementation. These fluctuations were strongly influenced by community-level obligations, including religious ceremonies, communal labor, and family responsibilities that are structurally embedded within Balinese village life.

Rather than indicating lack of interest, these patterns illustrate how behavioral engagement in community-based programs is shaped by external cultural and social priorities. Similar patterns have been documented in rural and community-embedded educational initiatives, where participation is mediated by collective obligations rather than individual motivation alone. Despite these constraints, full attendance was achieved in the final session, demonstrating participants' continued commitment to the program.

This table documents participant attendance for each session of the Beraban English Club and identifies contextual factors that influenced participation. The data support the interpretation of behavioral engagement as a context-dependent dimension of social engagement within a culturally embedded rural learning environment.

Table 1. Session-by-session participant attendance and contextual factors influencing behavioral engagement in the Beraban English Club program.

Session Date	Session Number	Participants Present	Contextual Factors
16-May-25	1 (Pre-test)	7	Complete participation; smooth program initiation
23-May-25	2	7	Stable participation maintained
02-Jun-25	3	1	Drastic decline due to local ceremonies (Piodalan, Rahinan), banjar obligations, work responsibilities
09-Jun-25	4	3	Continued ceremony-related absences and employment conflicts
13-Jun-25	5	4	Modest recovery despite ongoing obstacles
16-Jun-25	6	3	Persistent obstacles from banjar work obligations and employment
25-Jun-25	7	3	Community activities and PORSEDINES (village sports/arts event) scheduling conflicts
02-Jul-25	8 (Final-test)	7	Complete participation in final assessment session

Source: Data Proceed, 2025

Participation patterns reveal significant quantitative fluctuation influenced substantially by external community factors endemic to Balinese Hindu village life. The dramatic attendance decline during sessions 3-4 (sessions attended by only 1 and 3 participants respectively) directly corresponded with intensive community ceremonial obligations (Piodalan temple festivals, Rahinan ceremonies, and Ngaben cremation rituals) that culturally supersede other community activities. This pattern aligns precisely with risk mitigation projections developed during initial program planning, which anticipated that village-level social and religious responsibilities would substantially influence participant availability.
Recognizing participation challenges, the program implementation team implemented targeted engagement recovery strategies:

1. **Session 5 (June 13):** Personalized WhatsApp outreach to absent participants combined with informal benefit articulation resulted in attendance recovery to 4 participants.
2. **Session 6 (June 16):** Flexible scheduling adjustments and incorporation of post-session discussion opportunities, while maintaining low participation (3 individuals), demonstrated sustained commitment among engaged participants.
3. **Sessions 7-8 (June 27 and July 4):** Intensive communication emphasizing program value and personal encouragement yielded attendance increases to 4 and ultimately 7 participants respectively at the concluding assessment session.

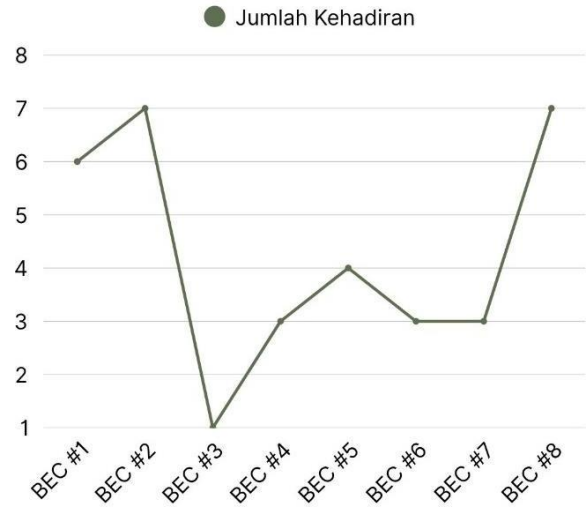


Figure 1. Graphics of Beraban English Club Attendance Trends Across Eight Sessions
Source: Data Proceed, 2025

English Language Proficiency Development

Quantitative assessment of English proficiency showed measurable improvement in participants' English proficiency over the duration of the program. As presented in Table 2, the group mean score increased from 61% in the pre-test to 82% in the final-test, representing an absolute gain of 21 points or a 34% improvement. At the individual level, the minimum score improved from 45% to 68% (+23 points, 51%), while the maximum score rose from 75% to 92% (+17 points, 23%). These results indicate that learning gains occurred across the full range of participants, from lower- to higher-performing individuals.

Table 2. English Proficiency Assessment Results Summary

Metric	Pre-test Score	Final-test Score	Absolute Change	Percentage Improvement
Group Mean Score	61%	82%	+21 points	+34%
Minimum Score	45%	68%	+23 points	+51%
Maximum Score	75%	92%	+17 points	+23%

Source: Data Proceed, 2025

However, within the context of a short-term, community-based intervention, these numerical changes should be interpreted as indicators of learning progression rather than definitive evidence of long-term language mastery. The test results primarily reflect improvement in basic vocabulary, sentence recognition, and comprehension, which are foundational components of communicative competence.

More importantly, qualitative observation and interaction data revealed meaningful changes in the quality of participants' English use that were not fully captured by test scores alone. In the early sessions, most participants relied on single words or very short phrases and often avoided speaking unless prompted. By the later sessions, participants were able to produce longer utterances, respond more spontaneously in simple conversations, and engage in basic role-play and group discussion using English. Although grammatical and pronunciation errors remained, communication became more purposeful, fluent, and confident.

Participants also demonstrated improved pragmatic use of English, such as asking for clarification, expressing simple opinions, and responding to peers in contextually appropriate ways. These developments suggest that the program supported not only measurable gains in test performance but also growth in functional and socially situated language ability. From a participatory action research perspective, this shift reflects the role of emotional and relational engagement in creating a learning environment where participants felt safe to experiment with language, make mistakes, and gradually expand their communicative repertoire.

Qualitative Analysis of Social Engagement

Qualitative observational analysis revealed nuanced dimensions of participant engagement that quantitative metrics alone could not capture. While overall social engagement levels remained moderate in aggregate terms, participants actively participating demonstrated marked interest in experiential learning methodologies including role-play activities, contextual dialogue, and small-group discussion formats. These instructional approaches successfully created inclusive, interactive learning environments while simultaneously strengthening interpersonal relationships among community members.

Initial program phases documented participant hesitancy regarding English oral expression, with individuals exhibiting anxiety concerning grammatical accuracy and pronounced reluctance to practice speaking. However, following exposure to multiple experiential learning activities emphasizing practice over perfection, observable shifts occurred in participant confidence and willingness to engage verbally. Majority of active participants demonstrated measurable progress in communicating ideas in English with increasing fluency, albeit utilizing relatively simple grammatical structures.

Qualitative field observations identified significant hierarchical participation dynamics within the Karang Taruna organization structure. Leadership absence or attendance patterns substantially influenced rank-and-file member participation, suggesting that organizational hierarchy influenced individual engagement decisions. This pattern carries important implications for future program design and recruitment methodologies.

Factors Influencing Social Engagement Outcomes

Analysis of engagement patterns revealed two primary categorical factors affecting program participation:

External Contextual Factors: Balinese Hindu community calendrical obligations substantially shaped participant availability. Ceremonial activities (particularly Piodalan temple festivals), family obligations (Ngaben cremation rituals), banjar communal labor expectations (ngayah), and seasonal village events (PORSEDINES) represented institutionalized competing demands that effectively superseded program attendance expectations among culturally-

embedded community members. This pattern, precisely predicted within initial risk mitigation analysis, underscores the necessity of designing community programs with explicit recognition of local cultural-religious-social calendars.

Recruitment and Engagement Strategy Limitations: The program's heavy reliance on coordination through Karang Taruna core leadership restricted outreach to a limited participant pool primarily comprising organizational officers. This recruitment approach inadvertently created narrow participation pathways that limited program access to broader youth populations who might possess English learning interest but lacked organizational leadership positions. Hierarchical organizational dynamics further meant that individual attendance decisions correlated with leadership participation patterns rather than emerging from autonomous personal motivation assessment.

Evaluation Metrics and Key Performance Indicator Assessment

Table 3. Beraban English Club Key Performance Indicator Realization

Key Performance Indicator	Target	Realization	Status
Active participants from Beraban	Minimum 10 active participants	7 active participants (2 withdrawals from 9 registrants)	Not Achieved
Participant attendance percentage	Minimum 75% per participant across 8 sessions	Majority participants <75% attendance	Partially Achieved
Proficiency assessment improvement	Minimum 20% score increase from pre-test	34% average score improvement (61% to 82%)	Achieved
Participant satisfaction	Minimum 80% satisfaction rating	87% reported high satisfaction with program and facilitators	Achieved
Final session participation	Minimum 80% attendance at concluding showcase	7 of 7 active participants (100%)	Achieved

Source: Data Proceed, 2025

Discussion: Implications and Recommendations

The Beraban English Club implementation generated critical insights regarding social engagement optimization within community-based educational contexts. Despite moderate overall social engagement levels, the program succeeded in establishing foundational programming capacity that demonstrates meaningful potential for expanded future implementation.

Key Findings:

1. **Competency Development Precedes Full Social Engagement:** Substantial English proficiency improvements (34% gain) occurred within a context of moderate social engagement, suggesting that quality pedagogical methodology can yield positive learning outcomes even when participation consistency remains suboptimal. This finding affirms that experiential learning approaches effectively promote language acquisition within community settings.
2. **Contextual-Cultural Factors Demand Intentional Design Accommodation:** Recognition and proactive accommodation of local ceremonial and social calendars represents an essential prerequisite for designing sustainable community-based programming. Future program iterations must incorporate explicit scheduling flexibility and strategic program calendaring aligned with local cultural and religious observances.
3. **Hierarchical Social Structures Constrain Participation Democratization:** Over-reliance on formal organizational structures for recruitment inadvertently limits program access and may reinforce existing social hierarchies. Direct, personalized outreach utilizing interest-based rather than position-based recruitment strategies could substantially expand participant diversity and engagement breadth.
4. **Personalized Motivational Engagement Demonstrates Efficacy:** Targeted personalized outreach (WhatsApp communication, flexible scheduling, verbally-expressed encouragement) produced measurable attendance recovery, suggesting that individualized engagement strategies meaningfully influence participant commitment and follow-through.

Strategic Implications for Nuanu Social Fund:

The research demonstrates that Nuanu Social Fund has successfully established a replicable model for community-based educational social events that combines tangible language skill development with community relationship strengthening. The Beraban English Club demonstrates how experiential learning can be operationalized within a community-based education program when it is intentionally aligned with Kolb's learning cycle. Program activities corresponded closely with the four stages of experiential learning. Concrete experience was provided through direct participation in English-speaking activities such as role-play, group discussion, and contextual dialogue. Reflective observation occurred through post-activity discussions in which participants reviewed their performance, shared difficulties, and received peer and facilitator feedback. Abstract conceptualization emerged as participants began to recognize patterns in vocabulary use, sentence structure, and communicative strategies. Finally, active experimentation was evident when participants applied these insights in subsequent sessions, gradually increasing their confidence and fluency.

This structured progression explains why meaningful learning occurred even when attendance was inconsistent. Emotional and relational engagement allowed participants who were present to move repeatedly through the experiential learning cycle, deepening both language competence and social connection. For Nuanu Social Fund, this indicates

that program quality depends less on continuous attendance and more on the integrity of experiential learning design within each session.

The findings also extend existing experiential learning literature by demonstrating that Kolb's cycle operates differently in community-embedded settings than in formal classrooms. In this case, movement through the learning cycle was shaped not only by pedagogy but also by social relationships, cultural obligations, and collective identity. Emotional safety and peer support functioned as enabling conditions for reflection and experimentation, suggesting that social engagement is a critical moderator of experiential learning in rural communities.

From a strategic perspective, Nuanu Social Fund should therefore design future programs with explicit alignment to the experiential learning cycle while simultaneously strengthening emotional and relational engagement. This includes incorporating structured reflection moments, peer-based learning, and repeated opportunities for practical application. Such an approach will not only improve learning outcomes but also reinforce community cohesion and long-term program sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This study explored how social engagement operates within a community-based English learning program implemented by the Nuanu Social Fund in Beraban Village, Bali. Using a mixed-methods, participatory action research case study, the findings demonstrate that engagement in rural education should not be reduced to attendance alone, but understood through the interaction of behavioral, emotional, and relational dimensions.

Although behavioral participation was constrained by cultural and communal obligations, emotional and relational engagement among active participants remained strong. These dimensions created a supportive learning environment that enabled meaningful language development even when attendance fluctuated. While test scores indicated learning progression, qualitative evidence showed more substantial growth in communicative confidence, fluency, and socially situated language use.

The study contributes academically by showing that emotional and relational engagement act as key mediators in experiential learning, particularly in culturally embedded community settings. This finding nuances Kolb's experiential learning theory by highlighting that movement through the learning cycle depends not only on instructional design but also on social relationships and psychological safety. Methodologically, the research illustrates how a mixed-methods participatory action approach can generate theoretically meaningful insight from small-scale community interventions.

These findings suggest that community-based experiential education offers a viable and scalable model for youth development and social cohesion when engagement is intentionally designed and culturally grounded.

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