
Teaching in Rural Areas: Voices of Surviving Civil Servant Teachers of English

ARRIA KHOTIMAH¹, SONI MIRIZON^{2*}, AND SARY SILVHIANY³

Abstract

In the 3T, *Tertinggal, Terluar, Terdepan* (Lagging, Outermost, and Frontier) areas, many obstacles and difficulties are faced by educators in Indonesia concerning human resources, infrastructure, and the environment. This study aims to explore how civil servant teachers of English survive teaching in the 3T areas. This study uses a phenomenological design. The data were collected using observation and interview. Three civil servant teachers of English who commuted regularly from the city to the rural area were involved as the participants in this study. Four key themes emerged as findings: teacher motivation, professional development, survival in teaching, and teaching experiences. Teacher motivation was related to their reasons to retain teaching in rural areas. Professional development covered teacher training, further study. Survival teaching included challenges teachers of English encountered, strategies applied, and solutions taken. Teaching experiences covered their opportunity to use more than one language, community bound, and culture adjustment. These elements are critical to fostering a sustainable and impactful educational environment in rural communities.

Keywords

Civil servants teacher, english teacher, rural area

Article History

Received 01 February 2024

Accepted 15 June 2024

How to Cite

Khotimah, A., Mirizon, S., & Silvhiany, S. (2024). Teaching in rural areas: Voices of surviving civil servant teachers of English. *Indonesian Research Journal in Education | IRJE |*, 8(1), 249 – 268.
<https://doi.org/10.22437/irje.v8i1.34654>

¹Student, Master's Degree in English Education, Universitas Sriwijaya, Indonesia

^{2*}Professor, Master's Degree in English Education, Universitas Sriwijaya, Indonesia; Corresponding author: smirizon@unsri.ac.id

³Senior lecturer, Master's Degree in English Education, Universitas Sriwijaya, Indonesia

Introduction

Access to high-quality education is essential so that young people can acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to enjoy life and successfully transition to further study, employment and enterprise (Halsey, 2018). Education is central to them being able to participate fully in a dynamic and increasingly complex world; it is critical for developing and nurturing human agency. Indonesia's educational system is always evolving to inspire learners and mentor the country's talented and brilliant young people. Education aims to develop students' abilities and intelligence across academic, social, and religious domains. Many public and private schools have been established in remote regions near Indonesia's borders to meet educational needs and support student success. According to Law No. 20 of 2003, education systematically develops learning environments and processes that help every student reach their full potential (Hero & Sni, 2018). For this to be effective, students must engage well with the teaching and learning routines in schools.

Presently, education in Indonesia, particularly in its interior regions, requires more attention. To address this, the government has initiated a program to assign civil servant teachers through a rigorous selection process to specific locations, fulfilling the honourable duty of educating the nation's next generation (Fay, 2017). Civil servant teachers, formally appointed and sworn in by the government, and non-civil servant teachers both bear significant responsibilities. The government has deployed many civil servant teachers to the 3T areas (Lagging, Outermost, and Leading regions) to provide quality education in rural regions, which face significant challenges due to their remote locations and limited infrastructure (Surchev, 2010). Teachers in these areas need strong motivation to remain in their roles for extended periods, often over five to fifteen years. Ensuring fair access to quality education remains a major challenge today, with significant differences in educational resources and outcomes between urban and rural areas hindering social and economic progress. Rural education often faces a combination of limited resources, geographic isolation, and lower socioeconomic status, leading to a substantial educational gap affecting students in these regions (Lavalley, 2018). Despite various initiatives to tackle these issues, rural students generally have less access to advanced courses, extracurricular activities, and experienced teachers compared to urban students (Showalter et al., 2019). However, global evidence indicates that well-designed policies and practical approaches can significantly reduce these challenges, moving towards a more inclusive educational system where a child's education quality is not determined by their zip code.

Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers is a high priority for many states (Sutcher et al., 2019) and is most difficult in states that include large rural areas (Trinidad et al., 2014). Rural educators face distinct expectations compared to their urban counterparts. While rural teachers may benefit from smaller class sizes and greater classroom autonomy, they often need to teach multiple subjects or grades within a single classroom. They must also adapt to school systems and policies that are closely tied to the local community (Barley, 2010). These challenges necessitate specialized preparation, yet many training programs lack practicum opportunities in rural settings, experience in teaching various grade levels, or specialized training to help teachers understand the community's role in rural schools. Schools in rural

districts like Musi Banyuasin face considerable challenges in attracting and retaining motivated teachers. According to Presidential Regulation Number 63 of 2020, addressing the issues of teachers in the 3T areas remains a significant challenge. Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) in 2020 indicates a shortage of around 21,676 teachers across elementary, junior high, high school, and vocational school levels. In South Sumatra, particularly Musi Banyuasin, there is a notable shortfall of civil servant teachers. A 2005 survey by the World Bank and the Ministry of National Education found that many teachers in rural and remote areas worked less than the minimum required 18 hours per week, exacerbating educational challenges.

Ensuring equitable education services across all regions, especially the 3T areas, is a priority. Despite efforts, education in Indonesia faces numerous challenges, with many schools not meeting minimum standards and teachers scoring below the expected competence levels (Baswedan 2014). Research highlights the unique challenges of teaching in rural areas, including isolation, cultural adaptation, misconceptions about education, infrastructure issues, and violence (Febriana et al., 2018). These studies suggest that rural Indonesian schools still face significant obstacles in providing quality education and meeting national standards. Additionally, research by Randall (2019) confirms that challenges in rural education extend beyond teachers and students to include issues like nutrition, housing, family stability, and self-confidence, which can cause stress and reduce teacher effectiveness. Overall, there is no single dominant factor influencing civil servant teachers' decisions to continue teaching in rural areas. Each study reveals different challenges and motivations, underscoring the complexity of the issue. This study aims to find out how civil servant teacher of English survive teaching in the 3T areas.

Literature Review

Teaching as a profession in Indonesia

The teaching profession necessitates a high level of competence, professionalism, and the ability to serve as a role model. Given the significant demands of this profession, it is imperative that educational authorities, including the government, provide focused and enhanced support. Teachers bear the critical responsibility of shaping the nation's future by delivering quality education to the youth. Within Indonesia, teaching stands at the heart of one of the most extensive and intricate educational systems globally (Chang et al., 2013). Similar to many parts of the world, Indonesian teachers are pivotal in shaping the nation's human resources and, consequently, its developmental trajectory (Suryadarma & Jones, 2013). In discussions of educational challenges, teachers invariably emerge as central figures, holding substantial influence within the educational ecosystem. This discourse extends to the impact of visionary leadership on the teaching profession in Indonesia, underscoring the significant role teachers play in national development and the drive to maximize their potential.

Civil servant recruitment and placement

A civil servant functions as a reformer, policymaker, and policy implementer. The effectiveness of policy implementation hinges on these individuals. In this role, civil servants are pivotal in shaping either excellent or poor governance. In Indonesia, the development of the policy employment management system began in 1974 with the enactment of the first public employee management law, UU No. 8, which outlined public personnel principles. This legislation was revised in 1999 due to changes in the political landscape and advancements in global HRM systems. Unfortunately, the new public personnel management law did not significantly enhance the system. The civil servant management system was centralized, with a focus on careers as the primary duties and responsibilities. Promotions were to be based on competence, job performance, and employee rank, without discrimination based on sex, race, religion, or social class. Professionalism among civil servants was mandated. While merit was a criterion in the ASN promotion policies, it was not clearly defined, leading to an ineffective system and instances of misappropriation (Ali et al., 2017).

According to Setyowati (2016) identifies four categories in the staffing structure: (1) The political executive system, comprising temporary state officials outside the civil service who have decision-making power. (2) The general civil service consists of permanent career employees with high prestige who are supported by friends and receive gifts or remuneration rather than passing a test. (3) The professional career system, based on hierarchical progression and professional expertise, involves permanent employees with a professional status. (4) The collective system is an employment contract based on collaboration between labour (the union) and public sector employees. According to Mashingaidze (2022), challenges are the hurdles and obstacles individuals face, demanding significant effort, energy, and skills to overcome. Successfully tackling these challenges results in victory and success. It's crucial to recognize that the nature of the outcomes post-challenge completion is triumph and accomplishment. Nonetheless, it's essential to acknowledge that the difficulty level of challenges may vary based on individuals' capabilities. Thus, challenges encompass any task requiring intention, determination, and substantial effort to conquer, as inferred from various prior definitions.

Education in rural area

Education in rural and remote regions requires heightened attention, particularly in the realm of education. The unequal distribution of teachers poses a significant challenge. While the quality of teachers is crucial, ensuring equitable distribution across regions, especially in the 3T areas, is equally imperative. Some areas within the 3T regions face a shortage of teachers, while others have a sufficient number. Hence, addressing this issue of teacher distribution is paramount (Ministry of Education, 2021). Both civil servant and non-civil servant teachers bear substantial responsibility in their roles. Civil servant teachers are formally appointed and sworn in by the government, whereas non-civil servant teachers are not (Meiza, 2016).

The government has appointed numerous civil servant teachers across various Indonesian regions, especially in the 3T areas, to provide quality education to children who are in dire need of it. These civil servant teachers serve as catalysts for student motivation and potential enhancement. The government's deployment of civil servant teachers to these areas is part of a broader policy aimed at elevating the standard of teaching personnel and fostering greater teaching motivation. They play a pivotal role in nurturing the next generation of Indonesians (Meldayani, 2021). The teaching and learning process may suffer when civil servant teachers are not fully equipped to establish a conducive educational environment. The presence of civil servant teachers in Indonesia has been steadily increasing, with placements spanning various regions.

This issue is particularly highlighted in the Musi Banyuasin Rural District Area of South Sumatra. Our initial survey revealed that some schools in these areas have civil servant teachers who have been transferred from other regions or cities. The relationship between students and civil servant teachers plays a crucial role in shaping the learning experience. If civil servant teachers lack cooperation, it can negatively impact students' comfort and willingness to engage in the classroom. Conversely, when there is a positive connection between students and civil servant teachers, it fosters a conducive atmosphere for learning and promotes academic progress (Herizal et al., 2023).

Methodology

This study used qualitative methods to analyze perspective of those being studied. It delves into ideas, perceptions, opinions, or beliefs that aren't easily quantifiable. Creswell (2012) describes qualitative study as a method to delve into and comprehend how individuals or groups perceive social human issues. This study process entails formulating evolving questions and methods, gathering data within the context of participants, analysing data in a bottom-up manner to identify overarching themes, and interpreting the significance of the findings.

Research design, site, and participants

This study employed a phenomenological design, drawing on (Adams & Van Manen, 2017) definition of phenomenology as the exploration of lived experiences, the elucidation of phenomena as they manifest in consciousness, and the investigation of essences. Phenomenology aims to uncover the common meanings inherent in the lived experiences of individuals regarding a particular concept or phenomenon. This approach focuses on identifying shared elements in participants' experiences of a phenomenon. The interpretative phenomenological study was chosen because of its emphasis on understanding people's lived experiences and its interpretive nature, going beyond conventional phenomenological approaches. According to Creswell (2006), the initial step in phenomenological study is data collection from individuals who have encountered the phenomenon under investigation. In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers to allow them to articulate their experiences of teaching English in rural areas in their own words.

The study was conducted in a rural district area, specifically in Musi Banyuasin, South Sumatera, Indonesia. Two public schools in Babat Supat, were chosen as the research sites. These schools employ civil servant English teachers who commute daily from urban areas to teach in rural areas. Despite being situated in rural locales, these schools attract teachers not only from the surrounding area but also from other regions or the capital city of South Sumatera. The study involved three civil servant English teachers from the aforementioned schools in Musi Banyuasin. These teachers have extensive experience teaching English in rural settings. One teacher had ten years of experience, commuting from Palembang to teach at SMAN 01 Babat Supat. Another had seven years of experience, also commuting from a city to rural area. The third teacher had been teaching for eight years in the rural area of Babat Supat. Two teachers were from SMPN 02 Babat Supat. These participants volunteered for the study and received no compensation. They were informed about other participants in the study. Interviews were conducted during the academic year to ensure the participants' experiences were fresh and easily accessible. Prior to the interviews, phenomenological study methods were employed to formulate appropriate questions to elicit detailed experiences from the participants. According to Creswell (2006), the first step in phenomenological research is to collect data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. According the statement recommends to using in-depth interviews with participants.

Data collection and analysis

The data in this study were gathered through a combination of interviews and observations. Interviews were scheduled during the spare time of the participants with fifteen question for the teachers, while observations took place during regular teaching and learning sessions, aligning with the teachers' schedule, and for observation is intentionally observing a case study or phenomenon, followed by writing fields notes of what is being observed to obtain the information needed to continue studying. The data collection for this study utilized both interviews and observations, conducted during the participants' available times and within the teaching and learning environments, respectively. The limitations of the research site made it impractical to collect data entirely on-site. Interviews, characterized by structured question-answer exchanges between interviewer and interviewee, were integral for obtaining reliable and detailed information from participants. This method is particularly crucial in qualitative research, facilitating the gathering of subjective perspectives and insights from respondents. However, complete data collection at the research site was not feasible, particularly concerning observations and interviews with sample students. The data in this study were analysed using the overview of the data analysis process outlined by Creswell (2018), which emphasizes systematic steps from specific to general, comprising several analysis stages.

The data in this study were gathered through a combination of interviews and observations conducted both online and offline. Interviews were scheduled during the spare time of the participants, while observations took place during regular teaching and learning sessions, aligning with the teachers' schedules. However, complete data collection at the research site was not feasible, particularly concerning observations and interviews with sample students. The data in this study were analysed using the overview of the data analysis process

outlined by Creswell (2018), which emphasizes systematic steps from specific to general, comprising several analysis stages. The methods used to verify the data were at the discretion of the writer. The validity and reliability of the findings in this study were confirmed via triangulation and member checking.

The research data is pressed by carrying out five steps of this overview data analysis process: 1) the initial step involved organizing and planning the analysis results, 2) the step entails reading or attentively reviewing all of the data, 3) the step involves coding all the data, which entails grouping data by identifying relevant portions and assigning descriptive terms to represent specific groups. 4) focused on generating themes and descriptions based on coding and category outcomes, preceding the construction of analytical frameworks. 5) Prior to advancing to the final step, the writer conducted triangulation by comparing coding results and themes from interviews with observations recorded in the observation grid and field notes to ensure result accuracy.

Findings

The findings in this research were based on the research questions to find out the teacher motivation and life experiences from the civil servant's teacher of English in MUBA rural areas. After carrying out the interview and observation using thematic analysis, it was found that there were certain aspects of the teacher motivation and life experiences of civil servants' teacher of English. The aspects are in Table 1:

Table 1. *Themes and Sub-themes*

Themes	Categories
Teacher Motivation	Reasons to Teaching in MUBA Rural Area
Professional Development	Teacher Training Teacher Further Study
Survival Teaching	The Challenges The Strategies The Solutions
Teaching Experiences	Use More than one language Community Bound Culture Adjustment

RQ1: Motivate civil servant teachers of English willing to teach in MUBA rural areas

Teacher motivation

Teachers often choose to teach in rural areas because they want to make a meaningful difference in the lives of students who may have limited access to quality education. The close-knit community atmosphere allows teachers to form strong and supportive relationships with students and families. Leech et al. (2022) suggest that rural teachers have the potential to

significantly influence their students' lives due to their closer involvement in both their educational and personal growth. In addition, many educators are attracted to the opportunity for professional development and the chance to develop innovative teaching strategies tailored to the unique rural challenges. The slower internet speeds and nature beauty of rural areas can also be a draw, providing a peaceful and rewarding lifestyle. Ultimately, the sense of purpose and satisfaction that comes from contributing to the improvement of education in rural areas is a strong motivator for many teachers. When asked about teaching in the rural areas of MUBA, Participant 1, a civil servant and English teacher, responded:

“The reason is the lack of teaching hours in the city, so I chose to teach in the rural area and stayed because I was too comfortable. I also have a desire to provide the best education for children in rural areas. If all civil servant teachers want to teach in the city, what about in the area? There are no teachers who want to teach here. “

Participant 2, another civil servant and English teacher, also added these reasons:

“Because in 2000, there were no openings for National Civil Service Candidates for English majors in the city, I chose to go to the regions and graduate in the OKU area. Later, I moved to the MUBA area to join my husband. Another reason for choosing to teach in rural areas is the difficulty and lengthy process for civil servant teachers to transfer to the city where they live. Additionally, city teaching positions are already filled by those who secured them first, leaving limited opportunities for others.”

Civil servant teachers of English have various reasons for being willing to teach in the MUBA rural area. These reasons enable teachers to provide the best learning process to students in these rural areas. By understanding the unique challenges and opportunities present, teachers can tailor their teaching methods to meet the specific needs of their students. Additionally, their dedication often stems from a desire to make a significant impact, contribute to community development, and ensure that students in rural areas receive a quality education comparable to their urban counterparts. This commitment not only enhances the students' learning experiences but also fosters a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. Each civil servant teacher who teaches English in rural areas has their own unique methods for staying motivated. Some find motivation by creating a sense of comfort within themselves, enjoying the daily commute from the city to the village. Others are driven by the direct contributions they can make to the school and the rural community.

RQ2: Civil servant teachers of English prepare themselves to teach in MUBA rural areas

Professional Development

One part of professional development is about how teachers conduct training. Teacher training demonstrates a commitment to enhancing the quality of education in Indonesia by focusing on the professional development of teachers. According to Harjantoa et al. (2017),

teacher training aims to improve teacher quality. Teacher professionalism is assessed through a competency-based approach, requiring teachers to master pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies. Civil servant teachers in the MUBA rural area also participate in training programs provided by the government or pursued independently, either online or offline. As Participant 1 mentioned:

“I have participated in various government-sponsored training programs, including the Teacher Professional Program (PPG) held offline for ten days in Palembang. Additionally, I have completed the BKGK Training (Technical Guidance for Cendikia Teacher Professionalism), MGMP DIKLAT (Subject Teachers' Conference), and several online webinars organized by the school and regional government.”

Teacher participant 2 added:

“I have participated in various training programs, including in-house training (IHT) and internal school training. Some of these programs are organized by local governments, while others are offered online by central and regional governments. I have participated in professional development training, national instructor training in Bogor and Padang, and several IHT sessions conducted by the school.”

While talking about that, teacher participant 3 said:

“Yes, there are several trainings and webinars provided by schools that can be pursued independently to enhance competence, especially for teachers in rural areas. I have participated in various programs, such as the BKGK Training (Technical Guidance for the Professionalism of Scholarly Teachers), DIKLAT MGMP (Subject Teachers' Conference), and online webinars organized by the school and regional government. These trainings have significantly improved my teacher competency, teaching materials, and module creation for learning.”

Based on the findings above, the writer concludes that developing teacher competence is essential for effective teaching and student learning. Teacher training significantly enhances teacher competence, which includes knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. Despite facing limitations, these civil servant teachers in rural areas continuously improve their competence and strive to provide the best for their students and schools. The information above explains how important teacher training is in rural areas, and it supports some teachers in rural areas to have further study. As noted by Participant 1, when inquiring about the teacher's professional academic achievements for the biography:

“I took my undergraduate education at Sriwijaya University, Palembang, with an English study program, and took further studies when I was accepted as a civil servant in a rural area school because I taught senior high school, so my educational competence had to be more in preparing myself to teach in rural areas. I am taking a master's degree at

PGRI University, Palembang, with an Educational Management study program. So currently, my highest education degree is M.Pd.”

The teacher participant 2 also said:

“I studied undergraduate at Sriwijaya University with an English Education study program. As a teacher and currently the deputy student of public relations, I took further studies to improve my performance in the rural. I am taking a Master's degree at PGRI University, Palembang, majoring in Educational Management.”

In conclusion, further study of civil servant English teachers in the MUBA rural area varies widely. Despite these diverse educational backgrounds, teachers from city areas still choose to teach in rural settings. Their ability to impart knowledge effectively results in comprehensive and engaging biographies that highlight their expertise, teaching approach, and dedication to education.

RQ3: The strategy of civil servant teachers of English to survive teaching English in rural area

Survival Teaching

According to Risnawati et al. (2022), teachers in rural schools encounter various challenges, including student motivation, availability of teaching media and resources, student competency, teacher development, and parental support. This assertion finds backing from civil servants in the MUBA rural area, as noted by Participant 1:

“One significant challenge is the students' minimal interest in learning English in rural areas. Another challenge stems from the parents, coupled with environmental factors such as transportation and access. Teachers face difficulties with the limited availability of just two buses for their daily commute, and the situation worsens during rain when the already challenging roads become almost impassable.”

Participant 2 added some answered about this:

“I have faced significant challenges teaching at a border area school in my village, primarily due to human resource issues with both students and the local community. The students lack motivation and don't see the importance of learning English, often forgetting to bring essential materials like books and dictionaries. The community's reception of city teachers is mixed: some appreciate their expertise, while others feel that the presence of these civil servant teachers reduces local teaching opportunities, creating tension. Additionally, poor road conditions and limited public transportation hinder teachers from reaching the school and affect students' timely access to education.”

Participant 3 also added,

“The first challenge comes from the environment, particularly transportation and access, which are quite limited. There are only two buses available specifically for teachers each day, and the situation worsens during rain when the already difficult roads become nearly impassable due to mud. The second challenge involves the students, who show very low interest in learning. Many students are not motivated to learn English, preferring to use their local languages in daily life, and they often forget to bring dictionaries or textbooks to school.”

From the findings of interviews conducted with civil servant teachers working in rural areas, it can be inferred that the challenges encountered by teachers in border villages include minimal interest in learning English among students, parental commitments affecting attendance, and transportation obstacles. After discovering the challenges of teaching in rural areas, the teacher also determined the appropriate strategies to overcome these challenges. When asked about strategies for thriving in teaching English in the MUBA rural area, Participant 1 provided the following insights:

How to survive when teaching English in a rural school:

“My first strategy when surviving the challenges of travel is to accept the journey and its experiences. They face many obstacles, such as traffic accidents, unpredictable weather, and traffic jams. I still appreciate it over the last 20 years. Despite the morning commute from the city to the village school, health and safety are consistently maintained. This sense of gratitude extends to the absence of major obstacles along the journey, reinforcing the sense of accomplishment despite the long distance.”

Participant 2 also added the answered:

“To thrive in teaching, especially in a setting where daily commuting spans from city to rural area, one must master the art of time management. This entails juggling responsibilities for school, the environment, and family, especially considering my mother's distant relatives residing in the city. Efficiently allocating time becomes imperative to not only excel professionally but also maintain a balanced personal life.”

In conclusion, the insights from civil servant teachers in rural areas underscore the complexity of the challenges they face and the importance of proactive strategies and mindset in overcoming them. Despite the obstacles, their dedication to providing quality education to rural students is evident, demonstrating that with perseverance and strategic approaches, success in rural teaching is achievable. Based on the two results above regarding challenges and strategies, civil servant teachers can provide solutions to survive teaching in rural areas, solutions for themselves, schools, students and the environment. One such solution, proposed by Participant 2, includes:

“The solution I suggest for transportation issues is to maintain a positive attitude and ensure timely arrival at school. Even if I am delayed due to rain, I contact a fellow teacher

to cover my class until I arrive. This perseverance strengthens our commitment. To address students' low interest, I encourage the habitual use of English and motivate them by emphasizing that with determination, they can compete with city students and achieve their dreams of becoming police officers, teachers, or successful individuals, regardless of their rural background. For challenges involving parents, I adhere to established procedures to manage the situation effectively.”

Participant 3 also said:

“The solution I give to address Human Resources challenges in rural areas involves implementing strategies to boost student motivation and engagement. This includes assigning repetitive tasks or exercises to instil a sense of competence and introducing influential figures who highlight the importance of English proficiency. Additionally, adopting a more inclusive teaching approach ensures that all students feel valued and actively participate in their learning journey. Collaboration with local communities is also essential, fostering support for education and promoting understanding of the specific needs of students in rural areas.”

Based on the above interviews, the authors can conclude that to survive and thrive in a rural teaching environment requires challenges to thrive, skilful strategies and appropriate solutions.

RQ4: What life experiences have contributed positively to the development of experienced teachers of English identities so that they stayed in MUBA rural areas

Teaching Experiences

Civil servant teachers who teach English in rural areas have many interesting experiences, one of which is the opportunity to use more than one language. Participant 1 said:

“Teaching in this rural school has provided a wealth of experiences, particularly in addressing student behaviour and learning attitudes. A significant challenge is fostering an interest in learning English among students to ensure they receive an education comparable to their city counterparts. Additionally, addressing and mitigating conflicts, such as school brawls, requires a dual approach involving both students and their parents. Teachers not only educate the students but also guide parents on effective, non-judgmental child-rearing practices. This comprehensive involvement aims to create a supportive learning environment and bridge the educational gap in rural areas.”

While asking, participant 2 added:

“As a teacher who comes from the city, I have the opportunity to learn the local language. So I teach English, which sometimes I translate directly into Indonesian or the local language.”

Also added participant 3:

“When I first started teaching at this school, I had a little trouble with the local language, but I kept learning the local language to support my communication with the students and the local environment, and this was my best experience.”

Being part of the rural area, civil servant teachers have another experience of being bound to the community. As people who come from rural areas, civil servant teachers have another experience of community bonding. Teaching in schools in rural areas offers a different and rewarding experience, which is characterized by personalized learning and strong community ties. Participant 1 stated:

“My interesting experience as a civil servant teacher in a rural area has been deeply enriching due to my involvement in local community activities. This role extends beyond the classroom, requiring me to engage with parents and guardians, particularly in training them to support their children's education during the COVID-19 pandemic until now. This training includes teaching parents new learning methods, effective homework management, and strategies to foster learning at home. Additionally, working in a rural setting has allowed me to build strong personal relationships with both students and their parents, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.”

Participant 3 also added:

“My enriching experience as a civil servant teacher in a rural area has been a journey that I cherish, allowing me to enjoy every moment with my family and students despite the long travel time. Additionally, I have had the privilege of contributing to the education of rural children who have many dreams and are eager to learn new languages while immersing myself in their culture. As a teacher from the city, I have come to appreciate new traditions in the village, learning directly from the local community and the students' parents.”

Civil servant teachers, including all participants, provide valuable insights gleaned from their tenure in the MUBA rural area. They also express personal fulfilment derived from enduring journeys, meaningful connections with students, and cultural exchanges with the local community. Collectively, these teacher experiences underscore the profound influence of committed teaching and community involvement in rural education. The community attachments of civil servant English teachers in rural areas are multifaceted and have a profound impact on the students and communities they serve. According to Sugiono (2017), Rural educators play a crucial role in building stronger, more cohesive communities. They not only teach but also provide emotional support and engage with the community, fostering a sense of belonging and unity. As stated participant 1

“To students in rural areas, it extends beyond academic development to include personal growth. I provide emotional support, motivation, and guidance to help them overcome obstacles and reach their full potential. Additionally, I contribute to the environment by developing agricultural systems and empowering local resources, sharing this knowledge through writing and introducing it to regional students.”

Participant 2 added:

“As a teacher in a rural school, my positive contributions extend beyond academics to fostering student achievement and dedication to education. By helping to build a sense of pride within the community, i create an environment where education is valued as an investment in the future. I believe that when students achieve, they and their region gain recognition from schools and communities beyond their own. This, in turn, positively impacts both the school and the local environment.”

Participant 3 also said:

“As a teacher in a rural school, I often involve being a mentor and role model for my students. I not only teach academic material but also inspire students to achieve their dreams, uphold moral values, and understand the importance of education in attaining success. Additionally, I serve as a mentor to parents, emphasizing the significance of education for every child through parent association activities and during report card meetings.”

The positive impact of MUBA rural areas on education and the environment is diverse, addressing a range of issues pertinent to both sectors. Through initiatives targeting sustainable agriculture practices, renewable energy projects, teacher training, and educational infrastructure enhancements, rural communities in MUBA are poised to reap significant benefits. These efforts not only foster community engagement but also promote environmentally conscious farming practices, thus contributing to the overall well-being and sustainability of the region. The establishment of relationships between students and teachers in rural areas is crucial in education, which has substantial implications for academic achievement and socio-cultural development among students. Three civil servant English teachers working in rural areas of MUBA agreed with the above statement, as expressed by Participant 1:

“In my opinion, it is essential for civil servant teachers to understand the local context, culture, and specific needs of rural areas communities to effectively adapt the curriculum. Building good relationships with students' parents is also crucial, as it supports education at home and fosters collaboration between school and family. Through positive and sustained involvement in these areas, civil servant teachers can significantly improve the quality of education, develop student potential, and empower local rural areas communities.”

Participant 2 added:

“As an integral part in the rural areas community, I have gained a deep understanding of local needs and dynamics, which strengthens the relationship between teachers and students through my involvement in daily village life. For example, when assigning projects to my students, I focus on empowering traditional goods and foods from the area. I might ask students to write about how to make traditional foods from MUBA, such as crispy seluang, MUBA's typical banana chips, or MUBA's signature kelempang or sautéed palm mushrooms.”

Participant 3 also added:

“Teachers and students in rural areas often collaborate on projects that benefit their communities, such as school agricultural initiatives, environmental efforts, or social projects. These collaborations not only strengthen their relationships but also allow them to make meaningful contributions to their communities.”

In conclusion, fostering robust student-teacher relationships in rural settings is pivotal for enriching students' academic achievements and social skills. These collective strategies illustrate how educators can elevate the quality of student-teacher relationships, leading to improved educational outcomes and the empowerment of rural communities.

Discussion

From the data obtained, information was obtained that this study found several statements about how civil servant English teachers survive teaching in 3T areas for a long time with the conditions forward by [Khattri et al., \(1997\)](#); teaching in rural areas refers to the practice of education in schools located in remote, geographically isolated, and often less populated regions. These areas typically have limited access to resources, infrastructure, and opportunities compared to urban or suburban areas. This study explained in several theme, the first theme describes the motivation of civil servant of English teacher in rural areas. The second theme is about how teachers in rural areas can improve their competence with the limitations that exist. The third theme is about how they survive teaching, and the fourth theme is about the interesting experiences they had when teaching in rural areas.

The motivation for civil servant English teachers to work in Musi Banyuasin's rural areas stems from a blend of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, often influenced by the impact on student learning engagement and outcomes. As evidenced by the teachers' testimonies, factors such as manageable commutes, familial proximity, and the desire to inspire rural children play crucial roles in sustaining their motivation. According to [\(Shikalepo, 2019\)](#), motivating teachers at rural schools can help school leaders nurture these factors for improved teacher motivation and quality of teaching and learning in rural schools. The ease of transportation and the opportunity to be close to family, alongside the drive to make a meaningful impact on students' lives. Similarly, motivation is based on the respect and value they receive from the local community, the comfort of the rural environment, and the manageable student behavior. Each civil servant teacher brings a unique perspective on what keeps them motivated, whether it's

the personal comfort of daily commutes, the satisfaction of contributing directly to the community, or the fulfilment of guiding and managing receptive students. Together, these insights underscore the diverse ways in which teachers can stay motivated and committed to their roles in rural education.

Preparing civil servant English teachers to teach in rural areas such as MUBA requires professional development to recognize and address the unique challenges and opportunities that exist in such environments. Teachers transitioning from urban to rural areas must become accustomed to specific hurdles, including social isolation, low salaries, and varied teaching assignments, as outlined by [Barley and Brigham \(2008\)](#). To improve the professional skills of civil servant teachers who teach English in the smallest areas, local and central governments have provided online and offline teacher training. In addition, professional development that focuses on rural issues and access to resources in rural communities is critical to teacher readiness, as suggested by [\(Tran et al., 2020\)](#). Local governments also provide teacher professional development training, as well as the integration of rural education topics into teacher preparation programs, which can provide the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the unique needs of rural schools. Teachers in rural areas also improve their professionalism in other ways, namely by conducting further studies; this is in line with previous study, which explains that teachers who have been selected by the government through various selections, training, and other teacher training activities aim to submit their dedication to educating all Indonesian people ([Meldayani & sa'adah, 2021](#)). The above statement is also supported by [Hasley \(2018\)](#), stating the key point is that the selection of teaching staff for rural areas and community schools should be targeted and nuanced to highlight the importance of the intellectual and personal qualities and attributes needed to be a successful teacher in accordance with what has been established that teaching staff must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree. The continuous study aims to have higher qualifications, the chances of getting a better and higher-paid position increase.

Civil servant teachers of English in rural areas can persist in teaching in rural areas with various challenges, such as low motivation to learn English among students, parental obligations that affect attendance, limited infrastructure, transportation or internet and environment. Each teacher highlighted different challenges, such as the lack of motivation among students and the perceived opportunity gap for local teachers. The findings in this study are also supported by previous study from Malaysia ([Aziz, 2022](#)), teaching English in rural areas is a significant challenge for English teachers. This systematic literature review explores the challenges faced by teachers. The major problem is that students in rural areas are often not proficient in English, which, coupled with their negative attitudes and behaviors towards language acquisition, exacerbates their difficulties. In addition, inadequate school facilities, equipment, infrastructure, and teaching aids also further hamper the effectiveness of English language teaching in rural schools. In other previous study conducted in remote areas in Indonesia also discusses the challenges of teachers found by [Febrina et al. \(2018\)](#). In 3T areas, teachers who teach in schools in remote areas in Indonesia experience several challenges related to 1) infrastructure, 2) learning resources, 3) language barriers, 4) parental mindset, 5) teacher incompetence; 6) student competence, and 7) student mindset. Involving parents in their children's education significantly increases support and motivation. Teachers can provide written feedback and include parents in educational activities, helping to overcome

student limitations and enhance their desire to learn English (Kusuma, 2022). Additionally, engaging local communities, including parents, community leaders, and organizations, strengthens the supportive learning environment. By using these strategies, civil servant teachers in rural areas can effectively address challenges and improve educational outcomes.

Based on the above challenges, civil servant teachers teaching English in rural areas have several strategies and solutions involving parents in their children's education significantly increasing support and motivation. Teachers can provide written feedback and include parents in educational activities, helping to overcome student limitations and enhance their desire to learn English (Kusuma, 2022). Additionally, engaging local communities, including parents, community leaders, and organizations, strengthens the supportive learning environment. By using these strategies, civil servant teachers in rural areas can effectively address challenges and improve educational outcomes. Civil servant teachers of English to teach in rural areas such as MUBA are required to recognizing and address the unique challenges and opportunities inherent in such settings. Teachers transitioning from urban to rural settings must become familiar with the specific hurdles, including social isolation, low salaries, and varied teaching assignments, as outlined by Barley and Brigham (2008). To address these challenges effectively, teachers often prepare learning materials in advance and bring them from urban centres to rural villages, recognizing the limited accessibility of resources in rural areas. A strategy that civil servant English teachers can employ is to capitalize on the strong sense of community in their neighborhoods. By involving colleagues, parents and community members, they can create a supportive environment that reduces isolation and increases connectivity. Sharing experiences to promote education in remote areas can increase community awareness of the challenges and opportunities in these areas, attract more educators and foster a supportive atmosphere for existing teachers. English language civil servant teachers in rural areas can succeed by adapting to unique challenges such as student demotivation, lack of parental support, and limited resources (Shahnaz,& Gandana 2021). Effective strategies include creating engaging and relevant lessons, using local languages to build rapport, and motivating students to recognize their potential (Supriadi et al., 2021).

In addition to the challenges faced, teachers in rural areas also have interesting experiences, such as learning the local language and culture, which improves teacher-student relationships and facilitates effective communication, especially in contexts where the language of instruction is different from the students' mother tongue. Civil servant English teachers teach and thrive in rural areas such as MUBA, which can ultimately improve the quality of education and drive positive outcomes for students and communities. In addition, engaging the local community, including parents, community leaders and organizations, will strengthen the supportive learning environment. Life experiences have positively influenced the identities of experienced English teachers, encouraging them to remain in rural areas of MUBA. A relevant study from South Africa, "Teachers' Life Experiences of Teaching and Learning in Rural Schools in the Western Cape," explored teachers' perspectives on students' literacy development in rural and urban environments. The study highlights the importance of the links between family, school and community for children's development, offering valuable insights for teachers in remote areas who aim to build those links (Singh, 2022). Here are some life experiences that can positively shape the identity of experienced English teachers and motivate them to remain in rural areas MUBA, community-bound, Rural communities usually

have a strong sense of community. Teachers can feel a sense of belonging and support from colleagues, parents and students. This feeling of being valued in the community can be a strong motivator to stay. Adjusting the curriculum to reflect local needs and engaging in culturally relevant activities strengthen connections between teachers, students, and the community. Collaborative efforts not only improve educational quality but also empower rural communities, demonstrating the profound impact of teachers' involvement in village life. These factors highlight why experienced English teachers may choose to stay in rural areas like MUBA, though individual reasons will vary. While this study offers valuable insights into the experiences and strategies of civil servant English teachers in Musi Banyuasin's rural areas, its limitations include restricted generalizability due to the specific regional and subject focus, potential sample size and diversity issues, reliance on self-reported data which may introduce bias, and insufficient consideration of external influences such as government policies and community support variations. Furthermore, the study's focus on positive experiences might not fully address the negative aspects and the evolving technological and infrastructural changes in these areas. Future research should address these gaps to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding.

Conclusions and Implications

In conclusion, In Musi Banyuasin (MUBA) rural areas, civil servant English teachers have a variety of experiences and motivations that combine extrinsic and intrinsic variables. Educators in rural locations are motivated by a desire to address the more comprehensive educational requirements and enhance student learning. Teachers find inspiration in genuine student interactions, community support, and personal improvement despite obstacles, including restricted professional development, poor incomes, and remote work. The distribution of teachers and the standard of education in rural areas are the two main goals of government rules and initiatives. Understanding local settings, participating in professional development, and integrating parents and communities in education are all necessary for preparing for and succeeding in these circumstances. Ultimately, the unique challenges and opportunities in rural settings contribute to the development and persistence of experienced teachers who find deep satisfaction in their roles.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest or any other similar divergence associated with this research article by the authors.

References

- Adams, C., & Van Manen, M. A. (2017). Teaching phenomenological research and writing. *Qualitative Health Research*, 27(6), 780–791.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732317698960>
- Amelia, R., & Istianah, T. N. (2021). Teaching strategies: How do teachers in remote area survive during remote learning? *ELT Forum: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 10(2),

- 146–153. <https://doi.org/10.15294/elt.v10i2.47856>
- Ali, D. M., Prasojo, E., & Lina, M. J. (2017). The transformation of merit system in Indonesian civil servant promotion system. *International Journal of Management and Administrative Sciences*, 5(4), 20-28.
- Amin, M. (2023). The Effect of Education, Training, and Motivation on the Civil Servant Performance at the City Population and Civil Registration Office, East Seram. *Utsaha (Journal of Entrepreneurship)*, 78-92. <http://doi.org/10.56943/joe.v2i3.356>
- Barley, Z. A., & Wegner, S. (2010). An examination of the provision of supplemental educational services in nine rural schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 25.
- Baswedan, A. R. (2014). Gawat darurat pendidikan di Indonesia. In *the emergency of Indonesian education*. A paper delivered at the meeting between Ministry and Head of Education Offices Indonesia-wide in Jakarta.
- Chang, M. C., Shaeffer, S., Al-Samarrai, S., Ragatz, A. B., De Ree, J., & Stevenson, R. (2013). *Teacher reform in Indonesia: The role of politics and evidence in policy making*. The World Bank
- Cresswell, M. J. (2012). *Entities and indices* (Vol. 41). Springer Science & Business Media.
- Cresswell, T. (2006). *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*. New York: Routledge.
- Fay, D. L. (2017). Pendidikan multikultural sekolah dasar di wilayah 3t daniel. *Angewandte Chemie International Edition*, 6(11), 951–952., 3(April).
- Febriana, M., Nurkamto, J., Rochsantiningsih, D., & Muhtia, A. (2018). Teaching in rural Indonesian schools: Teachers' challenges. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, 5(5), 11-20.
- Hero, H., & Sni, M. E. (2018). Peran orang tua dalam meningkatkan motivasi belajar siswa kelas v di sekolah dasar inpres iligetang. *JRPD (Jurnal Riset Pendidikan Dasar)*, 1(2), 129–139. <https://doi.org/10.26618/jrpd.v1i2.1568>
- Gallagher, K. C., Kainz, K., Vernon-Feagans, L., & White, K. M. (2013). Development of student–teacher relationships in rural early elementary classrooms. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 28(3), 520–528. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2013.03.002>
- Herizal, Marzulina, L., Erlina, D., Holandyah, M., Amelia, B. A., & Putri, H. Z. (2023). Teaching English in Rural Areas: A Closer Look Into Teachers' Challenges. *Edukasi: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran*, 10(2), 135–147. <http://jurnal.radenfatah.ac.id/index.php/edukas>
- Lavalley, M. (2018). Out of the loop: Rural schools are largely left out of research and policy discussions, exacerbating poverty, inequity, and isolation. *Center for Public Education*.
- Leech, N. L., Haug, C. A., Rodriguez, E., & Gold, M. (2022). Why teachers remain teaching in rural districts: Listening to the voices from the field. *The Rural Educator*, 43(3), 1-9.
- Meiza, C. (2016). Perbedaan Kebahagiaan Pada Guru Berstatus Pns Dan Honorer. *Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi Gunadarma*, 9(2), 97461. <https://doi.org/10.35760/psi>
- Meldayani, A., & Sa'adah, N. (2021). Teacher strategy to increase the learning motivation of public elementary school students during the covid-19 pandemic: the stories of civil servant teachers in 3t district. *International Journal Of Economics, Management, Business, And Social Science (Ijembis)*, 1(3), 295-308.
- Randall, P. W. (2019). *Teacher stress in rural schools: A phenomenological study on stress and its effect on teacher-perceived physical and mental well-being*. Northwest Nazarene University.

- Showalter, D., Hartman, S. L., Johnson, J., & Klein, R. (2019). Why rural matters 2018-2019: The time is now. Rural School and Community Trust. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED604580.pdf>
- Setyowati, E. (2016). Merit system in recruitment and selection process of civil servant candidate in Malang Indonesia (Implementation of recruitment and selection of civil servant candidate in 2010). *Journal of Administrative Sciences and Policy Studies*, 4(1), 83-95.
- Skerrett, A. (2008). Biography, identity, and inquiry: The making of teacher, teacher educator, and researcher. *Studying Teacher Education*, 4(2), 143-156. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17425960802433629>
- Sugiono, S. (2017). Making rural schools more useful for the community; prevention of brain drain. *Pedagogik: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 4(1).
- Surchev, P. (2010). Rural areas—problems and opportunities for development. *Trakia Journal of Sciences*, 8(3), 234-239.
- Suryadarma, D., & Jones, G. W. (Eds.). (2013). *Education in Indonesia*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A coming crisis in teaching? Teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the U.S.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.
- Tran, H., Hardie, S., Gause, S., Moyi, P., & Ylimaki, R. (2020). Leveraging the perspectives of rural educators to develop realistic job previews for rural teacher recruitment and retention. *Rural Educator*, 41(2), 31–46. <https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v41i2.866>
- Trinidad, S., Sharplin, E., Ledger, S., & Broadley, T. (2014). Connecting for innovation: Four universities collaboratively preparing pre-service teachers to teach in rural and remote western Australia. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 29(2), 1.
-

Biographical Notes

ARRIA KHOTIMAH is student, Master's Degree in English Education Graduate Study program, Universitas Sriwijaya, Indonesia.

SONI MIRIZON, Ed.D. is a professor, Master's Degree in English Education, Universitas Sriwijaya, Indonesia.

SARY SILVHIANY, PhD. is a senior lecturer, Master's Degree in English Education Graduate Study program, Universitas Sriwijaya, Indonesia.