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Playing catch-up: Vietnamese rural student voices on bridging academic marginalization

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ABSTRACT

The increasing adoption of English as the instructional language in Vietnamese higher education has created significant learning barriers for rural students. Their under-resourced schools and a communicative English-neglected curriculum provided limited foundations prior to engaging in lectures, presentations, and discussions now conducted exclusively in academic English. Rural students often face significant challenges when transitioning into this demanding academic environment due to their limited prior exposure to English and the disparities in educational resources between rural and urban areas, yet there is limited understanding of their experiences and coping mechanisms. This study examines the challenges faced by rural Vietnamese undergraduate English majors and investigates their coping strategies in achieving academic competency. Using semi-structured interviews, this case study investigated three Vietnamese undergraduate English majors from low-income, rural backgrounds at an urban university. The findings revealed two key dimensions: i) participants initially experienced significant challenges including skill deficits across all language domains and identity struggles manifesting as feelings of inadequacy and isolation and ii) students developed a comprehensive set of coping strategies encompassing language learning, social support, and psychological adaptation. The study highlights the necessity of implementing multi-dimensional support systems that address not only language learning but also social and psychological aspects of academic adaptation. Such comprehensive support, through precision language education, can promote more equitable access and inclusion in language education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The transition from rural to urban educational settings can be a complex and challenging process for students, especially those from low-income backgrounds. In Vietnam, many rural students face numerous obstacles when entering urban university environments, particularly in English major programs. The adoption of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in many Vietnamese tertiary education institutions presents an additional hurdle for rural students. The mismatch between students' language proficiency levels and the demands of EMI courses can impede their academic progress and overall success [1], [2]. Furthermore, rural students often struggle to adapt to the teaching methodologies and learning environments prevalent in urban university settings, which can differ significantly from their previous experiences [3], [4]. Consider a case in

our present study, Han, a student from a remote village in the Southwest of Vietnam. Despite performing well in her local high school and succeeding in having a place in a good university, she found herself struggling to keep up with her urban peers in her university's English major program. Her story is not unique, but it underscores a critical issue often overlooked in Vietnam's push for educational advancement: the marginalization of rural students in urban university settings.

The disparities in educational resources, facilities, and the quality of English language instruction between rural and urban areas are the main factors hindering students' readiness for this significant shift [5], [6]. For instance, the limited exposure to English language learning and instruction in rural areas, coupled with inadequate resources and support, can result in students having a low level of English proficiency when they start studying in English-major programs. This consequently decreases motivation and readiness to tackle the challenges they face [7], [8]. However, it is important to recognize that these factors do not operate independently; rather, they collectively contribute to the marginalized experiences of rural students [9]–[11]. Moreover, the implementation of English language policies without adequate support for disadvantaged students further complicates their transition and increases existing inequalities [6], [12]. While existing literature has explored the learning strategies employed by English-major students in Vietnam [13]–[15], there are still notable gaps in understanding about the coping strategies and institutional support mechanisms available to rural English majors [16], [17]. Addressing these gaps is essential for providing targeted interventions and support systems that can help rural students navigate the challenges they face and achieve academic success.

The present study aims to bridge these gaps by exploring the experiences of Vietnamese rural English majors at an urban university. By focusing on the factors contributing to their academic marginalization, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges these students encounter and the ways in which they navigate their academic journeys. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following questions:

i) What challenges do disadvantaged rural students face when studying in an English-major undergraduate program?
ii) What coping strategies do low-income, rural-origin students employ to overcome their academic marginalization?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic marginalization is a complex issue that affects various groups in higher education. It refers to the exclusion and resistance faced by marginalized communities, such as Dalits, Adivasis, African Americans, females, and Latinas, within academic settings [18], [19]. These groups often navigate oppositional positions and encounter barriers that restrict their full participation in higher education [19], [20].

The concept of academic marginalization is particularly relevant when examining the experiences of students with rural origins in urban universities. These students often face exclusion and barriers to the transition to and full participation in higher education due to a lack of cultural capital aligned with the dominant academic culture [21]–[24]. As Bourdieu suggests, the mismatch between rural students' cultural background and the expectations of urban universities can manifest at multiple levels, including the rural-urban divide and academic-cultural disparities [21], [25], [26]. This mismatch can lead to students' feelings of alienation, isolation, and difficulty in adapting to the new academic environment.

Marginalization could be further compounded by the intersection of the students' identities, such as their socioeconomic status, geographic location, and cultural background [27], [28]. The compounded effects of these can create significant barriers to academic success and well-being for rural students. For English major students with rural backgrounds, the marginalized experience is often characterized by their limited participation in academic activities due to numerous linguistic challenges. Cummins [29] suggests that there is a distinction between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). This distinction is particularly relevant for rural English major students who may struggle with the academic language demands of their theoretical English linguistics courses. Cummins [29] posits that CALP, developed in the first language, can support the acquisition of second language literacy skills. CALP plays a crucial role in academic achievement by enabling students to engage with academic content, demonstrate critical thinking, and express complex ideas effectively [30]. It is noted that while learners may appear fluent in social contexts, their skills may be superficial and limited to BICS, thus requiring the development of CALP for academic success. Research has shown students with rural backgrounds may struggle to develop the necessary CALP for English-medium courses [31], [32]. They often struggle with gaps in reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, which can significantly impact their participation and performance in English-major courses. These gaps are often the consequences of limited exposure to English language resources and practice opportunities [33]–[35] or inadequate support systems in rural areas [36]–[38].

Students transitioning from rural schools to urban universities can also be marginalized by a lack of social support and collaborative learning opportunities which are needed for the development of self-efficacy beliefs and positive academic identities. Self-efficacy beliefs, which refer to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish tasks, can contribute to students' motivation, persistence, and academic success [39], [40]. Research suggests that rural students with strong self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to persist and develop a positive academic identity [41]. Past research by Mickwitz and Suojala [42] highlighted that students with high self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to be persistent and hard-working. Similarly, a longitudinal case study by Hsu [43] investigated the motivational fluctuations among young rural English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, emphasizing the impact of school climate on student motivation and the importance of a supportive learning environment. The study found that students' motivational trajectories were shaped by various factors, including their perceived value of English, self-efficacy beliefs, and the support they received from teachers and peers. However, developing self-efficacy is a challenging task for any students who are feeling marginalized in their academic life. Furthermore, while social interaction and collaboration are important in the learning process [44], as collaborative learning opportunities allow students to engage in meaningful negotiation and knowledge acquisition [45], [46], rural students in urban universities may face challenges in having these opportunities due to factors such as cultural differences, language barriers, and limited social networks [47], [48].

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants and settings

The present study is a case study that employed a purposive sampling method to recruit three female students who were current students at a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The participants, Han, Duyen, and Lan, aged 21 years old and all originated from rural provinces in Vietnam. Note that all participants' names are pseudonyms. At the time of the study, they were in the third year of the English major undergraduate program. Prior to their university education, the participants had seven years of learning English as a compulsory subject in junior and senior high schools, as mandated by the Vietnamese national educational system. In this study, the selection criteria for sampling included students who experienced difficulties with English learning during their first and second years of study and those who originated from rural areas in Vietnam. These criteria were chosen to ensure that the participants had relevant experiences and insights related to the research questions. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, which included permission to record the interviews and use the data for research purposes.

3.2. Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, the participants' native language, to facilitate the expression of their thoughts and experiences. Each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes and was guided by a set of open-ended questions focusing on the participants' experiences of academic challenges, skill deficits, identity struggles, coping strategies, and perceptions of institutional support. The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

3.3. Data analysis

The interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the Goh procedures [49]. Goh [49] approach to thematic analysis involves three main steps: i) identifying meaning units; ii) grouping meaning units into categories; and iii) identifying themes that emerge from the categories. The analysis process began by identifying meaning units based on their relevance to the research questions. The meaning units were then grouped into categories through an iterative process of comparing, contrasting, and refining. Finally, themes were identified by examining the relationships and connections among the categories and considering their relevance to the research questions and the analytical framework. The analytical framework was informed by Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital [24], social cognitive theory [39], [44], and the notion of investment [50]. Constant comparison was employed throughout the analysis to ensure consistency and identify any negative cases or contradictions. The coding and analysis was assisted by ATLAS.ti [51].

4. RESULTS

The analyses of the interview data revealed two main themes corresponding to our research questions: challenges faced by rural students and coping strategies employed to overcome academic marginalization, as presented in Tables 1 and 2. The challenges can be broadly categorized into skill deficits and identity struggles, while the coping strategies encompass learning strategies, support systems, and psychological adaptation. To protect participants' identities, we use pseudonyms throughout the presentation of the findings.

4.1. Skill deficits and identity struggles

The rural students in this study reported significant challenges related to their English language proficiency and academic performance. They experienced gaps in all four language skills, which hindered their ability to communicate effectively in an English mediated environment. The students' self-evaluation revealed an awareness of their own language abilities and the limited opportunities they had to develop their language proficiency prior to entering university. For instance, the students acknowledged their weaknesses:

> "*I found that I was weak in all four skills, but the weakest was speaking skill*." (Han)
> "*For skills such as listening, speaking or writing essays, I didn't have much exposure*." (Duyen)

The students' difficulties in participating in classroom activities were further compounded by their limited English vocabulary and the pressure to respond to questions promptly. The cognitive load and time pressure faced by the students when attempting to engage in classroom discussions were evident in their struggles to find the right words to express their thoughts in English. Duyen's experience highlights this challenge:

> "*When in class, the teachers asked questions related to the lesson and invited students to answer, I listened to the teachers' questions but didn't know how to answer in English. In Vietnamese, I could think of a few ideas, but when I had to translate them into English, my vocabulary was not rich enough.*"

Table 1. Challenges faced by rural students

Theme	Sub-theme	Description
1. Skill deficits	Limited English proficiency	Students experienced gaps in all four language skills, with speaking being particularly challenging
	Limited prior exposure to English	Previous English language learning experience focused on mechanical tasks rather than communicative skills
	Academic language processing	Students struggled with real-time language processing in academic tasks
	Academic performance disparity	Students perceived a significant gap between their academic performance and that of their urban peers
2. Identity struggles	Feelings of inferiority	Students experienced psychological barriers and feelings of inadequacy
	Social isolation	Students felt disconnected from their urban peers
	Participation anxiety	Fear of speaking up in class due to perceived language inadequacy
	Cultural dissonance	Difficulty adapting to urban academic environment

The students attributed their skill deficits to the limited exposure to English language resources and practice opportunities in their hometowns. Their prior English language education focused primarily on fulfilling mechanical language tasks, such as vocabulary memorization, English to Vietnamese translation, and grammar exercises, with little emphasis on authentic communication and language use.

> "*In my high school, we only learned translating vocabulary and grammar*." (Lan)
> "*When studying in high school, I only had exposure to English through writing skills and doing exercises on paper.*" (Duyen)

The lack of opportunities for developing communicative English skills in their high schools posed significant challenges for the students when transitioning to the university environment, where they were expected to engage in a wide range of communicative language-demanding and academic tasks. Lan elaborated on this issue:

> "*For grammar, there were tips on what to use in certain positions, but in general, we didn't have any application for listening, speaking, reading, or writing*."

As a result of their prior language learning backgrounds, the students struggled to develop CALP and keep pace with their urban peers. The performance gap between the rural students and their urban counterparts was evident in the time required to complete assigned tasks and the overall quality of their work. Han described this challenge:

> "*When studying courses like listening, speaking, reading, writing, most teachers assigned tasks that had to be completed within about 5 minutes, students from the city could do it, but for me, I needed more time. I realized that my knowledge was too low.*"

What Lan told us further describes the magnitude of the academic gap experienced by the students:

> "*In the first year, my scores were very low, around 6 other something.*"

In addition to skill deficits, the students experienced identity struggles that affected their participation and engagement in academic activities. Feelings of stress, isolation, and academic inferiority were pervasive among the students, as they suffered from the psychological toll of their sense of otherness and academic marginalization. Lan described her emotional state:

> "*My feeling was fear. Firstly, it was difficult to talk to friends because I am from the province. Secondly, I felt inferior to them. So, I also had a feeling of inferiority. It upset me, stopped me from sharing it with anyone else. It somehow created pressure on me about scores compared to my peers. At that time, I had just come from the countryside, so I felt quite lonely and very stressed.*"

The students' lack of confidence and participation fears limited their engagement in classroom activities, as they hesitated to raise their hands or speak up in class. Lan and Duyen shared a similar experience about classroom discussions:

> "*In class, there was another pressure that I didn't dare to raise my hand to speak, and my scores were also affected.*" (Lan)
> "*I was reluctant to talk to my friends because they were much better at communicating in English than me.*" (Duyen)

The contrast between the rural students' language abilities and those of their urban peers was a recurring theme in their experiences. Duyen clearly described this feeling in the quote:

> "*I couldn't talk or answer my classmates in English. Meanwhile, my friends were very quick. When the teacher finished asking, they raised their hands and could answer in long, fluent English sentences. I could only answer using single words put together. I found myself much weaker than my friends.*"

4.2. Coping strategies

The participants employed four main types of language learning strategies. First, they engaged in memory and cognitive practices, working directly with language content to learn and improve vocabulary retention. As Han described:

> "*I read short paragraphs, looked up new words, took notes and memorized them. Then I reread the article, so I could remember some of the vocabulary.*"

Second, students made use of authentic materials by engaging with authentic English contents available online. Lan explained this approach:

> "*For listening, I focus on watching videos that I like rather than doing exercises, because doing exercises is a bit boring.*"

This preference for authentic materials over traditional exercises suggests students' awareness of the need for meaningful language exposure. Third, students employed metacognitive planning to organize and evaluate their learning. As Duyen shared:

> "*About the learning method in class, I think I had to pay attention to the teacher's lecture. The small details in the lecture, although simple, were very useful.*"

Fourth, students developed affective control strategies for managing emotions and anxiety in learning. Duyen described this process:

> "*Gradually, I learned from my friends, I changed myself and motivated myself more.*"

Table 2. Coping strategies employed by rural students

Category	Strategies	Description
Language learning	Memory and cognitive strategies	Working directly with language content to learn and remember
	Authentic materials use	Engaging with real-world English content
	Metacognitive planning	Organizing and evaluating learning
	Affective control	Managing emotions and anxiety in learning
Social support	Peer support	Engaging in group study and practice
	Teacher support	Actively approaching teachers for help or making use of available academic support
Psychological adaptation	Academic identity development	Developing a sense of belonging in academic community
	Goal setting	Building internal drive for improvement by setting and pursuing academic objectives
	Self-reflection and evaluation	Using reflective insights to adjust learning approaches and maintain motivation

The students utilized two main types of social support strategies. The first involved peer support through group study and practice. Students were also creative in making use of language practice opportunities, as the students described:

> "*Every time before the midterm or final exam, I would make an appointment with my group of friends to study together or explain the lesson to each other*." (Lan)
> "*At home, my roommates and I occasionally organize English-speaking days. Whoever can't speak English will have to sweep the house*." (Han)

The second type involved teacher support, where students actively approached teachers for help or made use of available academic support. As Duyen and Lan appreciated the tailored support from teachers:

> "*The teachers encouraged me to share my difficulties with them, so they could support me... the teachers really helped me a lot.*" (Duyen)
> "*The teachers also sympathized with us who are students from the provinces, so they explained the lessons very carefully and slowl*y." (Lan)

The psychological adaptation strategies manifested in three key ways. First, students worked on academic identity construction. They tried to develop a sense of belonging in the academic community. Lan described this transformation:

> "*after the initial period, having made small progress, answering correctly, I felt that I was getting better. Gradually I was motivated, so I was no longer afraid to raise my hand*."

Second, students constructed an internal drive for improvement by setting and pursuing academic goals. As Duyen and Han expressed:

> "*I motivated myself to study well, and not to disappoint my parents at home*." (Duyen)
> "*I motivated myself by looking back at the reason why I chose this major, and what pushed me to continue pursuing it.*" (Han)

Finally, students reported doing self-reflections to adjust their learning approaches and maintain motivation. Duyen demonstrated this in the following excerpt:

> "*I asked myself if I had really tried my best... when I tried my best and still couldn't reach my goal, I then would think about giving up. These thoughts gave me more motivation*."

5. DISCUSSION

One of the key findings of this study is the profound impact of the mismatch between the rural habitus and the dominant academic culture on students' experiences of inferiority, isolation, and stress. This finding is consistent with previous research in other EFL/English as a second language (ESL) contexts that has highlighted the challenges faced by rural students in adapting to urban educational environments [21], [22], [52]. However, the present study extends this understanding by demonstrating how the discrepancy in cultural capital can lead to feelings of inadequacy and marginalization among rural students. The participants' descriptions of their emotional states, characterized by fear, loneliness, and stress, revealed

the significant impact of their identity struggles on their well-being and ability to fully engage in their studies. Therefore, addressing the cultural dissonance experienced by rural students is crucial for promoting their academic success and well-being.

Another notable finding of this study is the significant role played by self-efficacy beliefs and academic identity development in building rural students' motivation and resilience. The participants' initial struggles with low self-efficacy and a sense of inadequacy compared to their urban peers imply the need for enhancing strong self-efficacy beliefs and positive academic identities. This aligns with Bandura's social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the role of self-efficacy in individuals' motivation, persistence, and achievement. Previous research has also demonstrated that self-efficacy and academic identity could contribute to rural students' success [41], [42], [53]–[55]. The present study thus suggests that interventions aimed at improving rural students' self-efficacy and helping them develop positive academic identities could be effective in promoting their motivation and resilience.

The study also revealed students with rural backgrounds may employ various coping strategies and approaches in their transition and learning. This corroborates with several past studies indicating that cognitive, metacognitive, and social language learning strategies are helpful in improving language proficiency and academic performance [56]–[61]. Additionally, we observed that rural students who successfully engaged in collaborative learning environments showed marked improvements in both their language skills and academic confidence. However, our study reveals a paradox: while social support is important, rural students often face significant barriers to accessing these support networks due to cultural and linguistic differences. Nevertheless, given the need to assist rural students, these findings imply that curriculums and study programs should incorporate language learning strategies and increase collaborative learning opportunities.

Finally, the findings show that institutional and instructional support could contribute to rural students' academic success and well-being. This indicates the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms. The participants' experiences with detailed explanations, slower-paced lectures, and encouragement from teachers and staff are just some examples of providing tailored support to address the unique needs of rural students. This is consistent with previous research that has emphasized the significance of institutional support in facilitating the academic journey of rural students [16], [17]. However, the limited access to learning facilities and equipment reported by the participants of this study suggests that there are still administrative issues in providing equitable access to resources for rural students.

To address the abovementioned issues and promote the academic success and well-being of rural background students, the concept of precision language education, as proposed by Lian and Sangarun [62] offers a promising approach. Precision language education is a relatively new paradigm that focuses on identifying individual learning problems of each student, and not group problems. It incorporates a research-based approach to personalize education [63]. This approach is inspired by the concept of precision medicine, which aims to provide accurate, detailed, and contextualized treatment plans tailored to the specific needs of individual patients [62]. Precision language education aligns with a critical epistemological framework that underpins the construction of knowledge and learning, focusing on understanding how knowledge is acquired [63]. This framework recognizes that individual learners' differences, experiences, and cultural backgrounds contribute significantly in shaping their learning processes and outcomes.

The core principle of precision language education is to provide accurate, detailed, timely, adaptive, and contextualized personalized data to facilitate interventions that are tailored to each learner's specific needs [62]. This approach involves a two-step process: a diagnostic phase and an intervention phase. In the diagnostic phase, educators collect extensive data on learners' responses, interactions, and difficulties to accurately assess their individual needs and challenges. This data can be gathered through various methods, such as assessments, surveys, interviews, and observations. The intervention phase involves providing targeted support and resources based on the precise diagnosis of each student's needs, ensuring that the support provided is effective and relevant.

In the context of rural students adapting to urban educational environments, precision language education can address the cultural dissonance experienced by these students, which is crucial for promoting their academic success and well-being as discussed earlier. By collecting personalized data on individual students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and challenges, teachers can develop targeted interventions that help bridge the gap between rural and urban cultural norms. These interventions may include cultural sensitivity training for faculty and staff, peer mentoring programs, and workshops that help rural students develop the cultural capital needed to navigate the dominant academic culture.

Precision language education can also be applied in boosting rural students' self-efficacy and helping them develop positive academic identities. By learning from detailed data on individual students' strengths, weaknesses, and learning preferences, educators can design interventions that promote mastery experiences, offer timely and appropriate encouragement, and create a supportive and inclusive learning

environment. These interventions can help rural students develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy, confidence in their abilities, and a more positive academic identity. Furthermore, in a similar manner, collecting data on rural students' learning styles, preferences, and challenges can inform teachers about what specific strategies need to be integrated into the teaching for different students. This can help them navigate the challenges they face and achieve academic success.

However, implementing precision language education in many EFL contexts can be challenging, particularly when numerous students require targeted interventions simultaneously within the same class. A single teacher may struggle to fulfill all the tasks required by this approach. Nevertheless, the premise of precision language education remains valid, as the availability of individualized data paves the way for precise, personalized interventions. Technology can offer potential solutions to this challenge. For instance, Vu *et al*. [64] demonstrated the effectiveness of a technology-based learning system in collecting individual learners' listening problems and automatically providing personalized follow-up listening exercises for each learner. This approach allows learners to focus on their specific problems rather than attempting to keep pace with their peers. Moreover, with the remarkable advancements in artificial intelligence and large language models in recent years, creating AI chatbots based on collected learner data has become increasingly feasible. These AI chatbots can serve as private tutors for each student to provide individualized support tailored to their needs. In this scenario, teachers play a crucial role in collecting detailed and precise data to inform the knowledge base and personality of the AI chatbots, ensuring that they are equipped to address the specific requirements of each student.

Another possible solution, yet not novel, is to adopt a tiered support system, similar to the response to intervention (RTI) model used in many educational settings. RTI is a widely recognized problem-solving model that aims to provide targeted assessment and interventions to students based on their responses to specific curricula and instructions [65] In this model, students are provided with increasing levels of support based on their individual needs [66]. At the first tier, all students receive regular instruction within the classroom. Teachers would collect data on students' responses, interactions, and difficulties to understand their individual needs and challenges, as emphasized in the diagnostic phase of precision language education [62]. Students who require additional support move to the second tier, where they receive targeted interventions in small groups or through peer tutoring. The use of peer tutoring and cooperative learning strategies at this tier can help reduce the burden on the teacher to provide individualized support for every student, as students work together and learn from each other. The third tier is reserved for students who need intensive, individualized support, which can be provided through one-on-one sessions with the teacher or specialized support staff. This tier aligns closely with the intervention phase of precision language education. However, it is noted that the success of this RTI model with an emphasis on precision relies on effective screening and progress-monitoring practices in educational institutions [67]. Teachers therefore would need to be equipped with the effective practices, skills, and strategies to collect and analyze student learning-related data, design appropriate interventions, implement those in a timely manner, and monitor student progress over time.

6. CONCLUSION

Our study recounts a story of transformation–how rural Vietnamese students in English majored programs overcome their initial struggles to find their place in the study program. While these students started their journey facing considerable challenges, they did not remain passive. Instead, they actively developed a comprehensive set of coping strategies spanning three key areas: how they approached language learning, how they built support networks, and how they adapted psychologically to their new environment. These insights point to something important in educational practice: we need to think differently about supporting rural students. Since focusing solely on developing their language skills is not adequate, we must consider the whole student, including their social connections and psychological well-being. Precision language education offers a promising path forward, as it allows us to tailor support to each student's unique needs across all these dimensions. Yet we recognize the practical challenges this presents in the context of Vietnamese universities and similar EFL contexts, where resources are often limited and classes are large. To address this, we propose two potential solutions: First, utilizing technology, including AI-based learning tools, to provide personalized support at scale. Second, implementing tiered support systems that can efficiently allocate resources based on student needs while maintaining the personal attention critical for psychological and social support.

While this case study's small sample size may limit its generalizability, its findings raise important questions for higher education stakeholders about creating more equitable learning environments. Future research needs to explore how well these integrated support systems actually work, because ultimately, bridging academic marginalization begins with understanding how to better support students as they navigate their academic transitions.

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C : **C**onceptualization
M : **M**ethodology
So : **So**ftware
Va : **Va**lidation
Fo : **Fo**rmal analysis
I : **I**nvestigation
R : **R**esources
D : **D**ata Curation
O : Writing - **O**riginal Draft
E : Writing - Review & **E**diting
Vi : **Vi**sualization
Su : **Su**pervision
P : **P**roject administration
Fu : **Fu**nding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent was obtained from all participants in this study.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author, [DCV]. The data, which contain information that could compromise the privacy of research participants, are not publicly available due to certain restrictions.

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