



The Challenges Faced by Indonesian Diaspora Teachers in Applying a Religious Psychology Approach to Teaching at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School, Thailand

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Abstract

This study aims to reveal the challenges faced by Indonesian diaspora teachers in applying a religious psychology approach to teaching at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School, Thailand. Using a qualitative approach, this research employs a case study method involving observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The research subjects consist of Indonesian diaspora teachers teaching at the school. The results show that teachers face challenges in the form of cultural differences, language barriers, adaptation to the local curriculum, and difficulties in integrating religious values with students' educational needs. Additionally, support from the school and local community plays a crucial role in helping teachers overcome these challenges. This study contributes to the development of more effective teaching strategies for Indonesian diaspora teachers, especially in religious-based schools abroad.

Kata kunci:

Guru diaspora, psikologi agama, pengajaran, Thailand, pendidikan agama.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru diaspora Indonesia dalam menerapkan pendekatan psikologi agama dalam pengajaran di Sekolah Sangkhom Islam Wittaya, Thailand. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi kasus yang melibatkan observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan analisis dokumen. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari guru diaspora Indonesia yang mengajar di sekolah tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru menghadapi tantangan dalam bentuk perbedaan budaya, kendala bahasa, adaptasi terhadap kurikulum lokal, dan kesulitan dalam mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai agama dengan kebutuhan pendidikan siswa. Selain itu, dukungan dari sekolah dan masyarakat setempat memainkan peran penting dalam membantu guru mengatasi tantangan ini. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan strategi pengajaran yang lebih efektif bagi guru diaspora Indonesia, terutama di sekolah berbasis agama di luar negeri.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the main pillar in shaping students' character and knowledge. In the context of globalization, cross-cultural education has become increasingly important, especially when teachers from different cultural backgrounds teach in unfamiliar environments. This phenomenon requires adaptation not only in teaching methods but also in understanding the cultural and religious values of students (Banks, 2015).

This phenomenon can be explained through the concept of cross-cultural adaptation, where teachers are required to understand, accept, and manage cultural differences without losing their identity. Cross-cultural adaptation is a dynamic process involving the adjustment of attitudes, knowledge, and skills (Kim, 2001). For Indonesian teachers teaching abroad, this adaptation includes mastering the local language, understanding the local education system, and being able to adjust teaching methods according to the characteristics of students from different cultural backgrounds.

Research on the adaptation of foreign teachers shows that the dynamics of interaction in adaptation involve negotiation, face-to-face conversations, situations, and conversational contexts, as well as communication adaptation strategies that encompass challenges, difficulties, and even potential communication failures that may lead to social rejection until foreign teachers are eventually accepted (Hayat, 2018). They are expected to adapt to differences in student characteristics, learning habits, as well as parental and community expectations. Furthermore, adaptation challenges also arise in the form of differences in social values and cultural norms that affect interactions between teachers and students.

In such interactions and adaptations, a deep understanding of the religious psychology approach is needed as a complementary aspect, allowing for the integration of psychological principles with religious teachings to support students' spiritual and moral development. The religious psychology approach in Islamic education aims to help students understand and internalize religious teachings profoundly. This approach emphasizes the importance of spiritual experience and character development, not just cognitive knowledge acquisition (Azra, 2019). However, applying this approach in a cross-cultural context requires sensitivity to cultural and religious practice differences.

In certain cases, such as Indonesian teachers teaching in Islamic schools in countries with a non-Muslim majority, adaptation challenges become more significant. Teachers must be able to explain Islamic values in a way that is understandable and acceptable to students without causing cultural misunderstandings. This is evident in the experience of Indonesian diaspora teachers at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School, Thailand, where they are expected not only to be educators but also to serve as cultural and religious agents.

Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School is chosen as the research object based on its unique characteristics as an Islamic educational institution in Thailand involving Indonesian diaspora teachers. The presence of these teachers provides an opportunity to examine how teachers face challenges in the religious psychology approach applied in a multicultural and multi-religious educational environment.

Previous studies have focused more on general teaching aspects without highlighting the role of religious psychology in depth. Among them is a study titled "Teachers' challenges, capabilities, and needs in teaching learners with reading difficulties," which focuses on examining the challenges, abilities, and resources of teachers in teaching students with reading difficulties (Adao et al., 2023).. Another study, "Islamic studies in higher education in Indonesia: Challenges, impact and prospects for the world community," only focuses on the challenges of Islamic studies in higher education in Indonesia for the global community (Abdullah, 2017). Both studies are limited to discussions that have not touched on the realm of religious psychology and diaspora. A study in the same location was also found titled "English Language Learning for Children at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School during the

Covid-19 Pandemic," which focuses only on English language learning at the school (Qadafi, 2020).

From these relevant studies, a research gap opens for a more focused exploration of the challenges faced by Indonesian diaspora teachers in applying a religious psychology approach at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School, Thailand. This study is expected to provide new insights into the strategies used by diaspora teachers to overcome challenges in the context of cross-cultural education. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the challenges faced by Indonesian diaspora teachers in applying a religious psychology approach to teaching at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School, Thailand, and to identify the strategies they use to overcome these challenges. Thus, this study is expected to contribute to the development of Islamic educational practices in a multicultural context.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the challenges faced by diaspora teachers in applying religious psychology approaches at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School, Thailand. This approach was chosen because it aims to understand the meanings, patterns, and social dynamics from the perspectives of the participants within their natural environment. Through a qualitative approach, this research focuses on exploring and understanding the meanings individuals ascribe to various social or humanitarian issues (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2014). The research location was purposively determined at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School in Pattani Province, Thailand. This location was chosen because it is a multicultural Islamic educational institution involving Indonesian diaspora teachers in its teaching practices. The research informants consisted of Indonesian diaspora teachers with a minimum of one year of teaching experience and students actively engaged in the learning process.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation (Rachman et al., 2024). In this study, interviews were conducted using a semi-structured method to provide flexibility for the researcher in exploring the teachers' experiences in instilling Islamic values. Participant observation was employed to directly observe social interactions and the dynamics of the learning process occurring within the school environment. Meanwhile, the documentation study focused on collecting information from various educational documents, such as religious activity programs and records of student activities.

Data analysis followed the stages developed by Miles and Huberman, namely data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions (Miles et al., 2013). Data reduction is carried out by organizing and simplifying the data into main themes, such as forms of interaction, values taught, and cultural challenges. Data presentation is performed using descriptive narratives to clarify the relationships between themes and support a deeper understanding of the research context. Conclusions are drawn inductively, identifying consistent thematic patterns within the data.

Technique and source triangulation were applied to enhance data validity, serving as a strategy to enrich the accuracy and credibility of the research findings (Patton, 1990). To ensure the validity of the data, this study employed source triangulation and member checking strategies. The member checking technique was implemented by requesting participants to review the initial interpretations of the research findings, thereby ensuring that the results accurately reflect their actual experiences (Jacobson, 2019). Furthermore, the credibility of the data was reinforced through intensive field engagement, the researcher's reflective journaling, and an audit trail documenting the entire research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The religious psychology approach implemented by Indonesian diaspora teachers at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School in Thailand serves as a crucial strategy in shaping students' character and religious understanding. However, in practice, these teachers face various challenges rooted in cultural differences, the local education system, and the prevailing social conditions in Thailand. Based on interviews with several Indonesian diaspora teachers, these challenges can be categorized into several key aspects: cultural and linguistic differences, the diverse religious backgrounds of the students, adaptation to the local education system, limitations in facilities and infrastructure, as well as the influence of digitalization and social media.

1. Cultural and Linguistic Differences

One of the primary challenges faced by Indonesian diaspora teachers is the cultural and linguistic gap between Indonesia and Thailand. Although the school is based on Islamic principles, students come from diverse cultural backgrounds, leading to varying understandings of religious practices and social interactions. These differences often influence how students respond to the religious psychology approach applied by the teachers.

In interviews with several teachers, they revealed that students exhibit habits and manners distinct from those typically observed in Indonesia. For instance, teachers KRH and NA explained that, in Thai culture, respect toward teachers tends to be more formal, whereas personal communication between teachers and students is less intimate.

"Teaching in Thailand, particularly at an Islamic school like Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School, provides a vastly different experience compared to Indonesia. One immediate observation is the difference in students' cultural habits and their manner of interacting with teachers" (KRH, 2024).

"Some students are less open in expressing their feelings and issues to teachers. Respect toward teachers is more formal, reflected in the way they greet or speak politely: (NA, 2024).

Furthermore, DE highlighted that communication differences between teachers and students pose obstacles to implementing the religious psychology approach.

"Students do show a high level of respect toward teachers, for example, by bowing their heads or placing their hands in the wai gesture when meeting teachers. However, I feel that interpersonal communication between teachers and students lacks depth. Many students feel hesitant or unaccustomed to openly discuss matters with teachers, especially non-academic issues" (DE, 2024).

From interviews with these three informants, it is apparent that the culture of respect toward teachers in Thailand is more formal than in Indonesia. Students demonstrate respect through gestures such as bowing their heads or performing the wai, yet interpersonal communication between teachers and students tends to be less profound.

KRH and NA emphasized how this habit affects the application of the religious psychology approach in the classroom. They noted that many students feel reluctant to express their feelings and problems to teachers, meaning that building close emotional relationships takes longer. Debby added that this obstacle poses a challenge

in instilling religious values through a psychological approach that emphasizes compassion, empathy, and openness.

In Islamic education, the religious psychology approach aims to shape students' character and spiritual understanding through close relationships between teachers and learners. However, in a more formal environment like Thailand, diaspora teachers must adapt to different communication patterns. The approach, which stresses affection and emotional closeness, also requires more time to be accepted by students.

Moreover, language barriers further complicate interactions. MWT pointed out that not all students are fluent in Malay or English, so communication sometimes requires translators or more effective nonverbal methods. In this context, the religious psychology approach, which is based on interpersonal communication, encounters difficulties in delivering messages optimally.

"Language is one of the greatest challenges in teaching here. Not all students are fluent in Malay or English, while we as Indonesian diaspora teachers also have limited proficiency in Thai. Nevertheless, we strive to adapt well, especially as we often socialize with the local community" (MWT, 2024).

In agreement, RS and RT added:

"Sometimes, the message we want to convey is not always received optimally. For example, when I try to give moral advice or motivation based on Islamic values, students sometimes interpret it differently. This can make the internalization of values less effective" (RS, 2024).

"Yes, that's true, but we accompany this with English lessons, which we are required to teach as diaspora teachers. It was challenging at first when I started teaching here, but after some time, I was able to adapt" (RT, 2024).

OV and OM also shared their experiences when they struggled to explain religious material using terms different from those used in Indonesia.

"I find it difficult to explain religious concepts in a language students understand. There are Islamic terms commonly used in Indonesia that here have different terms or even different understandings. Sometimes, I have to use gestures or write words on the board to clarify my meaning. In some situations, I have to ask students who are more fluent in Malay or English to translate for their peers" (OV, 2024).

"I also frequently use pictures, visual media, or videos as aids so that students can better grasp the material. I try to understand their emotions, read their expressions, and create a more interactive classroom atmosphere so they feel comfortable asking questions or responding, despite language limitations" (OM, 2024).

From these five informants, it can be concluded that language barriers constitute a major obstacle in interaction and message delivery within a cross-cultural educational setting. Indonesian diaspora teachers in Thailand face communication challenges because not all students are fluent in Malay or English, while the teachers themselves have limited proficiency in Thai. This often hampers the effectiveness of

conveying messages, particularly in moral education and Islamic values, which students may interpret differently.

Nevertheless, the teachers strive to adapt using various strategies such as nonverbal communication, assistance from students more proficient in Malay or English as translators, and the use of visual media like images and videos to clarify concepts. Mandatory English instruction is also part of their effort to overcome communication barriers. Additionally, fostering an interactive classroom environment and understanding students' expressions and emotions are crucial approaches to ensure messages are better received. Through these efforts, diaspora teachers endeavor to fulfill their duties optimally despite significant language challenges.

Language limitations in educational interaction are not merely technical communication obstacles but also affect the internalization of values, cognitive processes, and the effectiveness of teaching methods employed. Therefore, an approach combining interpersonal communication, educational psychology, and learning technology offers a solution to enhance communication effectiveness in multilingual environments.

In conclusion, the discussion regarding cultural and linguistic differences in the experiences of Indonesian diaspora teachers in Thailand indicates that these two aspects constitute the main challenges in implementing the religious psychology approach in teaching. Culturally, respect toward teachers in Thailand is more formal compared to Indonesia, resulting in a more rigid communication pattern and a lack of emotional closeness between teachers and students. This affects the effectiveness of the religious psychology approach, which emphasizes compassion, empathy, and openness in building relationships with students. The process of internalizing Islamic values also requires more time because students tend to feel reluctant or unaccustomed to openly express their feelings and problems to teachers.

From the perspective of the Psychology of Religion, the challenges faced by Indonesian diaspora teachers in Thailand in teaching Islamic values can be analyzed through the concepts of religious internalization and emotional relationships within religious learning. The psychology of religion emphasizes that an individual's religious experience is influenced by the social environment and interactions with religious authority figures (Paloutzian & Park, 2005) (Paloutzian, 2017). In this context, the approach of the psychology of religion applied by teachers aims to cultivate students' spiritual understanding through a close relationship between teacher and learners. However, cultural differences that result in more formal and rigid communication patterns can hinder the development of emotional bonds that support the internalization of religious teachings. Without such emotional closeness, students may find it difficult to deeply comprehend and internalize religious values.

Moreover, language barriers constitute another significant challenge in the interaction between teachers and students. Not all students in Thailand are fluent in Malay or English, while Indonesian diaspora teachers also have limited proficiency in Thai. These obstacles often lead to suboptimal communication, especially in conveying messages related to moral education and Islamic values, which may not be fully received or understood by the students. To overcome these challenges, diaspora teachers adopt various adaptive strategies, such as utilizing nonverbal methods, enlisting translators among more proficient students, and employing visual media such as images and videos. The mandatory teaching of English also forms part of efforts to enhance communication effectiveness.

Beyond technical communication challenges, these cultural and linguistic differences also affect the cognitive processes of students in understanding the religious teachings and moral values imparted. Therefore, a more holistic solution is

required, combining interpersonal communication, educational psychology approaches, and the use of learning technologies to improve the effectiveness of interactions within a multilingual environment. Despite facing numerous obstacles, Indonesian diaspora teachers in Thailand continuously strive to adapt their teaching methods to successfully instill religious values amid prevailing cultural and linguistic differences.

2. Diverse Religious Backgrounds of Students

Although this school is Islamic-based, the students come from quite diverse religious backgrounds, both in terms of their level of religious understanding and their daily religious practices. Some students originate from devout Muslim families, while others possess a more moderate or minimal understanding of religion. This diversity poses challenges in implementing religious psychology effectively, particularly when the values taught by teachers do not align with the established customs within the students' families.

During interviews, DE and RT revealed that some students hold a very strict interpretation of Islam and find it difficult to accept a more inclusive approach, especially in learning situations that require cooperation between male and female students.

"Some students have a very strict understanding of Islam, making it difficult for them to accept a more inclusive approach. This is especially evident in learning activities that require collaboration between male and female students. They tend to feel more comfortable in environments where gender segregation is strictly maintained" (DE, 2024).

"I have noticed that some students do not reject the concept of inclusivity in learning per se, but prefer to adapt it within certain limits that, in their view, still align with religious values" (RT, 2024).

In line with this, KRH and MWT also disclosed that female students sometimes prefer gender-segregated environments.

"When presented with more inclusive teaching methods, students feel less comfortable. This is most apparent during learning activities involving interaction between male and female students. They prefer environments where gender segregation is upheld" (KRH, 2024).

"I observe that some students are actually open to the concept of inclusivity in learning, but still wish to maintain certain boundaries according to their religious values. For example, they do not mind working in mixed-gender groups but prefer interactions that maintain distance and respect the norms they uphold" (MWT, 2024).

Conversely, OV and RS noted that some students are less interested in religious aspects because they are more accustomed to a more secular educational system.

"On the other hand, there are also students who show less interest in religious aspects. They are more familiar with a secular education system, so approaches that heavily emphasize religious values are sometimes less effective for them" (OV, 2024).

“I frequently encounter students who consider religious lessons as a lower priority. They focus more on other subjects deemed more relevant to their future, such as science or technology, thus their engagement in religious discussions tends to be low” (RS, 2024).

This situation demands teachers to be more flexible in applying religious psychology so they can adapt to the existing diversity. Teachers need to employ approaches that are not overly dogmatic but still uphold the principles of moderate Islamic teachings appropriate to the students’ realities.

Additionally, there are differences in interpretation regarding religious teachings. Students coming from different families or communities often hold perspectives that do not always align in religious practices. Some follow teachings strictly and textually, while others are more flexible and contextual. Teachers must exercise caution in delivering material so as not to appear partial to one particular understanding and to respect the diversity present. As NA and OM stated:

“One of the challenges I face is bridging the differences in religious understanding within the classroom. Some students are very strict in practicing religious teachings and expect a learning environment fully in accordance with their beliefs. Meanwhile, others are more flexible and open to various perspectives. As a teacher, I must be careful not to seem biased towards any particular group” (NA, 2024).

“I often encounter situations where students feel uncomfortable interacting with peers who hold different religious understandings. For example, some more religious students tend to avoid discussions with those who hold more moderate views. My challenge as a teacher is how to create a conducive atmosphere where they can learn to appreciate one another without having to sacrifice their respective beliefs” (OM, 2024).

From the interview data with informants, it can be understood that the diversity of students’ religious backgrounds in an Islamic-based school presents unique challenges for teachers in effectively applying religious psychology. Some students have very strict Islamic understandings and tend to reject more inclusive approaches, especially in learning that involves interaction between males and females. Meanwhile, there are students who are more flexible towards inclusivity concepts but still wish to maintain certain boundaries consistent with their religious values.

From the perspective of the psychology of religion, the diversity of students’ religious backgrounds illustrates how individual religious experiences are shaped through social interactions, family environments, and education. The psychology of religion emphasizes that a person’s understanding and practice of religion are not solely derived from normative teachings but also from the internalization of those values through personal and social group experiences (Hood et al., 2009). The variety in religious comprehension backgrounds presents challenges for diaspora teachers to adapt teaching methods that can accommodate varying levels of religious understanding.

There exist groups of students who are less interested in religious aspects because they are more accustomed to a secular educational system. These students prioritize other subjects perceived as more relevant to their future. Such diversity in understanding demands that teachers not only grasp the students' backgrounds but also balance an educational approach that is not overly dogmatic while still upholding the principles of moderate Islam.

Differences in interpretation of religious teachings also have the potential to generate tension in social interactions within the classroom. Some students feel more comfortable associating with peers who share similar beliefs, whereas others feel judged due to their more moderate viewpoints. In this context, teachers must act as bridges connecting various understandings to prevent polarization among students. They are required to foster a conducive learning environment that respects diversity and encourages mutual appreciation without compromising the beliefs of each party.

From the perspective of religious identity theory, religious identity develops through social interaction and the process of identification with specific groups (Utami et al., 2021). Students who hold strict religious understandings tend to associate themselves with groups holding similar beliefs, thereby showing resistance to accepting values perceived as conflicting with their group. Conversely, more secular students may have a weak religious identity or may not feel bound to Islamic values in their education. In this regard, teachers play a crucial role in creating a space that allows all students to develop their religious identities healthily without causing social segregation within the classroom. An inclusive religious identity can be cultivated through approaches that encourage the understanding that diversity in religious practices is not a threat but a part of social dynamics that needs to be comprehended more broadly.

3. Adaptation to Digitalization and the Thai Education System

The education system in Thailand operates under regulations and teaching methods that differ from those in Indonesia, requiring diaspora teachers to adjust their approaches according to the applicable curriculum. Several teachers expressed that they often encounter difficulties in aligning their teaching methods with the curriculum implemented at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School. According to NA, Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School integrates the national Thai curriculum with Islamic education.

"Here, an integration of the Thai national curriculum and Islamic education is applied, whereby general subjects such as Thai language, Mathematics, and Science are taught alongside Islamic subjects like the Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh, and Arabic language. This certainly poses a challenge for teachers in harmonizing both curricula within the learning process. However, I consider it not overly difficult" (NA, 2024).

This curriculum integration is confirmed by RT, who stated that Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School in Thailand allocates a substantial portion of teaching to Islamic religious education.

"Islamic religious education is given significant emphasis, especially in southern Thailand where the majority of the population is Muslim. Nevertheless, oversight remains under the Thai Ministry of Education, which rigorously controls the national curriculum. This school resembles a modern

pesantren or madrasah in Indonesia. For me, the challenge lies in the religious aspects that I must study extensively to prepare for teaching the students" (RT, 2024).

In addition to curriculum adaptation, technological advancements and social media present distinct challenges for teachers in applying religious psychological approaches. OM stated that students nowadays obtain much of their information from social media, resulting in external influences from the internet that often contradict the values taught at school.

"Students receive more information from social media than from conventional sources. This causes external internet influences to frequently conflict with the moral and ethical values imparted in school. They are exposed to diverse perspectives that do not always align with the moral education we cultivate in the academic environment" (OM, 2024).

In line with this, DE and MWT revealed that some students show greater interest in digital entertainment content, whereas religious teachings delivered in the classroom are sometimes perceived as boring.

"Sometimes, students themselves request ice-breaking entertainment sourced from social media, especially TikTok. However, when the lesson resumes, some become less active. They tend to prefer learning that contains entertainment elements. Therefore, I occasionally utilize technology to provide digital and entertaining-based instruction. Nonetheless, this requires preparation and cannot be done arbitrarily" (DE, 2024).

"Usually, there are trending phenomena on social media that students adopt and bring into the school environment, such as certain terms that are inappropriate for their age. This poses a challenge for me to provide understanding that such expressions are not suitable for students to use" (MWT, 2024).

To address these challenges, some teachers have begun implementing digital-based educational approaches, such as using short films, interactive quizzes, and social media-based discussions as part of their instructional strategies. According to RT, social media also plays a role in shaping students' mindsets regarding religion, hence teachers must be more proactive in understanding and guiding them to avoid exposure to misleading or deviant information.

"Social media currently plays a significant role in shaping students' religious perspectives. The information they receive can be very diverse, but not all of it is accurate or consistent with authentic religious teachings" (RT, 2024).

KRH also emphasized that the role of teachers is increasingly crucial in understanding the flow of information consumed by students.

"Teachers must be more active in guiding and directing students to prevent exposure to incorrect or deviant information. With the right approach, we can assist them in comprehending religion more effectively" (KRH, 2024).

As a teacher, OV likewise considers that the present challenge lies in how a teacher must possess skills in utilizing digital technology as a learning medium without overusing it.

"I see the main challenge today is how teachers should have the skills to use digital technology as a learning tool, yet avoid excessive application. Technology indeed facilitates the teaching process, but if not used wisely, it can diminish the essence of direct interaction between teacher and students. Therefore, a balance between technology and conventional methods must be maintained" (OV, 2024).

From the interviews, it is evident that diaspora teachers at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School in Thailand must adapt to an education system that integrates the national Thai curriculum with Islamic education. These diaspora teachers face stimuli in the form of Thai educational regulations that merge the national curriculum with Islamic studies, as well as the influence of social media on students. In response, they adapt by developing technology-based learning strategies, such as interactive quizzes, short films, and social media, to make their teaching methods more effective and engaging for students. This demonstrates that learning does not only occur in formal classroom settings but also through external stimuli such as digital trends adopted by students from social media.

The primary challenges they encounter include adjusting teaching methods to the applicable regulations and balancing the instruction of general and religious subjects. Furthermore, technological and social media developments influence students' mindsets and behavior, requiring teachers to devise more innovative and relevant learning strategies.

According to religion identity theory, an individual's religious identity is formed through social interactions and the internalization of religious values influenced by their environment, family, and media (Peek, 2005). In this context, students at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School face challenges in building their religious identity because they receive information from various sources, including the school curriculum and social media, which may not always align with Islamic values. Teachers strive to guide students away from exposure to misleading information by providing digital education that maintains Islamic values. This demonstrates that students' religious identity does not develop instantly but rather through a process of interaction with educational settings and social media, which shapes their mindset and understanding of religion.

Teachers are aware that students are more attracted to digital content with entertainment elements, prompting them to integrate technology into teaching, such as using social media, short films, and interactive quizzes. However, they also emphasize the importance of maintaining a balance between technology and conventional methods to preserve the essence of learning. Consequently, the role of teachers becomes increasingly crucial in guiding students to avoid false information and ensuring that religious and moral values remain an integral part of their education.

CONCLUSION

The challenges faced by Indonesian diaspora teachers in implementing a religious psychology approach include cultural and linguistic differences, the diverse religious backgrounds of students, and the need to adapt to the Thai education system, which integrates the national curriculum with Islamic education. Additionally, technological advancements

and social media have influenced students' mindsets and behaviors, requiring teachers to develop more innovative and relevant teaching strategies that meet the needs of the digital generation.

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