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Jurnal Sosiohumaniora Kodepena
Information Center for Indonesian Social Sciences
Vol. 7, No.1, Mei 2026
pISSN 2723–7516
eISSN 2723–4762

Challenges in Islamic Religious Education Learning among Diaspora Students at the Guidance School under the Indonesian School of Kuala Lumpur

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a significant role in fostering students' faith, moral values, and character development. However, its implementation among Indonesian diaspora students at Sekolah Bimbingan (SB) Pandan Indah, Kuala Lumpur, encounters various challenges arising from the students' social, cultural, and residential environments. This study aims to analyze the challenges faced in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education for Indonesian diaspora students and to identify the strategies employed to address these challenges. The study adopted a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis involving teachers, students, and school administrators. The data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while triangulation was employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. The results reveal that the major challenges in IRE learning include disparities in students' prior religious knowledge, limited instructional time, insufficient parental support due to work commitments, inadequate

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learning facilities, and the influence of the social environment and digital technology. To address these challenges, teachers implemented adaptive learning strategies, utilized digital learning media, provided gradual and individualized guidance, and strengthened communication with parents. The study concludes that the successful implementation of Islamic Religious Education for Indonesian diaspora students requires strong collaboration among schools, families, and the surrounding community to achieve the intended educational objectives effectively.

Keywords: diaspora, islamic religious education, learning challenges, adaptive learning,

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is one of the core subjects that plays a crucial role in fostering students' faith (*iman*), piety (*taqwa*), noble character, and overall moral development. It serves a fundamental function in instilling Islamic values derived from the Qur'an and the Hadith (Nirwani, 2024). Through IRE, students are guided to understand, internalize, and practice Islamic teachings in their daily lives (Siddik et al., 2025). Accordingly, IRE is expected not only to provide students with a theoretical understanding of Islamic principles but also to enable them to apply these principles in their everyday behavior. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education constitutes an integral component of Indonesia's national education system in its efforts to cultivate a generation that is morally upright, religiously committed, and socially responsible.

The education sector has the responsibility to develop students who excel not only in academic achievement but also in character development. Nevertheless, students' character remains a major challenge that requires continuous improvement and the active involvement of all stakeholders in the educational process (Kulsum & Muhid, 2022).

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Indonesian schools abroad presents unique challenges compared with its implementation in schools in Indonesia. One such institution is Sekolah Bimbingan (SB) Pandan Indah, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which provides educational services for Indonesian diaspora children, particularly the children of Indonesian migrant workers. The students enrolled at this school come from diverse social, economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, which significantly influence the learning process, including the teaching and learning of Islamic Religious Education. As students growing up in a multicultural environment, Indonesian diaspora learners are exposed to various social, cultural, and educational influences from their host country.

These conditions may affect their religious understanding, religious practices, language use in the learning process, and learning motivation. Furthermore, limited learning facilities, differences in students' prior religious knowledge and academic preparedness, limited instructional time, and inadequate parental support due to work

commitments constitute additional factors that may hinder the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education instruction.

On the other hand, the rapid advancement of information technology and digital media has significantly influenced the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Islamic education plays a vital role in the lives of Muslim communities worldwide. In the midst of the rapid development of the digital era, Islamic education faces substantial challenges while simultaneously offering promising opportunities (Manshur & Isroani, 2023). The ease of access to diverse sources of information enables students to broaden their understanding of Islamic teachings; however, it also exposes them to information that may not align with Islamic values or the curriculum implemented in schools.

The digital revolution has profoundly transformed various aspects of human life, including the ways people think, interact, and access information. Amid the growing forces of globalization, advances in information technology have created a new era characterized by faster and more open access to knowledge (Kadir, 2025). Consequently, teachers are required to adopt innovative, adaptive, and context-sensitive instructional strategies to ensure that the objectives of Islamic Religious Education can be achieved effectively.

These challenges indicate that the success of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) among Indonesian diaspora students depends not only on teachers' professional competence but also on the support provided by families, the learning environment, and institutional educational policies. The challenges faced by both traditional and modern Islamic education become increasingly complex when situated within the context of diaspora communities. Muslims living abroad are often confronted with the dilemma of preserving their religious identity while adapting to different local values and educational systems that are predominantly based on secular curricula (Purwanto et al., 2025).

Furthermore, religious moderation remains a central issue in global academic and policy discourse, particularly as a response to the increasing prevalence of intolerance, religious extremism, and identity-based conflicts (Prasetiyo, 2026). Therefore, identifying the various challenges encountered in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education is essential for formulating more effective learning strategies that are responsive to the characteristics and needs of Indonesian diaspora students while fostering attitudes and values that reflect the character and national identity of Indonesia (Abubakar & Anwar, 2014).

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze the various challenges encountered in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) among Indonesian diaspora students at Sekolah Bimbingan (SB) Pandan Indah, Kuala Lumpur, and to identify the factors influencing the learning process as well as the strategies that can enhance the effectiveness of IRE instruction. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for teachers, school administrators, and policymakers in developing higher-quality Islamic Religious Education programs that

are responsive to the needs and characteristics of Indonesian diaspora students living abroad.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of the challenges encountered in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) among Indonesian diaspora students at Sekolah Bimbingan (SB) Pandan Indah, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This approach allowed the researchers to explore the real-life context of the learning process and to identify the factors influencing the implementation of IRE.

The study was conducted at Sekolah Bimbingan (SB) Pandan Indah, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Research participants were selected through purposive sampling based on the criterion that they possessed relevant knowledge and experience regarding the implementation of Islamic Religious Education. The participants included the school principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, students, and parents.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain detailed information regarding the implementation of IRE, the challenges encountered during the learning process, and the strategies adopted to address these challenges. Classroom observations were undertaken to examine teaching and learning activities, teacher–student interactions, and the overall learning environment. Document analysis involved reviewing relevant documents, including the curriculum, lesson plans, school programs, and other supporting materials.

The data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, data credibility was ensured through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking. These procedures were employed to verify that the findings accurately reflected the participants' experiences and the actual conditions in the research setting. By applying these methods, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the challenges in implementing Islamic Religion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at Sekolah Bimbingan (SB) Pandan Indah**,** Kuala Lumpur, has been carried out in accordance with the curriculum adopted by the school. The instructional process focuses not only on the delivery of religious knowledge but also on the development of students' moral character, the cultivation of regular religious practices, and the internalization of Islamic values in everyday life. Nevertheless, the implementation of IRE continues to face several challenges that affect the effectiveness of achieving its educational objectives.

1. Differences in Students' Foundational Religious Knowledge

Religion is an inseparable aspect of human life and constitutes a fundamental human right. No individual has the authority to impose a particular religion on another person, including parents imposing their religious beliefs on their children (Ngaisah, 2015). The findings reveal that students possess varying levels of foundational knowledge in Islamic Religious Education. While some students demonstrate adequate proficiency in reading the Qur'an and understanding the basic principles of Islamic worship, others still require intensive guidance and continuous assistance.

These differences in students' foundational religious knowledge are influenced by several factors, particularly their family backgrounds. The family serves as the primary educational environment and plays a crucial role in instilling Islamic values, nurturing religious practices, and shaping children's moral and spiritual character from an early age. Students who grow up in families with strong religious traditions generally demonstrate better Qur'anic literacy, a stronger understanding of Islamic worship, and more positive religious attitudes than those who receive limited religious guidance at home. Furthermore, parents' educational attainment, their commitment to religious education, socioeconomic conditions, and the extent of parental involvement in children's learning at home also contribute significantly to the development of students' religious knowledge and competencies (Surur & Kamilah, 2025).

2. Limited Instructional Time

The available instructional time is not fully adequate to achieve all learning outcomes. Teachers are required to adjust the learning materials to the limited time allocation; consequently, several practical activities, such as Qur'anic reading instruction, prayer memorization, and religious practice activities, cannot be implemented optimally. Regarding the effectiveness of time allocation for Islamic Religious Education (IRE) within the **Merdeka Curriculum**, previous studies indicate that although intracurricular time allocation has been implemented according to the established guidelines, its application still faces several challenges. Limited instructional time, insufficient coordination in implementing co-curricular activities, and the less-than-optimal utilization of learning time have resulted in some IRE learning objectives not being fully achieved (Halimah & Muluk, 2024).

Limited instructional hours also constitute a major challenge in delivering fiqh materials at the elementary school level. Learning materials that require demonstrations and direct practice, such as prayer procedures, require more time compared to theoretical content. Therefore, teachers often experience difficulties in balancing theoretical explanations with practical religious activities, resulting in some student competencies not developing optimally (Putra et al., 2026). IRE instruction in general schools commonly receives limited instructional time, while its objectives encompass the simultaneous development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

This limitation may hinder the optimal internalization of Islamic values if learning relies solely on classroom activities. Therefore, reinforcement through religious

activities outside regular class hours is necessary, including Qur'anic recitation (*tadarus Al-Qur'an*), congregational prayers, short religious lectures (*kultum*), and various religious extracurricular programs, so that students' religious character development can take place continuously and sustainably (Rouf, 2015). Limited Parental Support and Involvement Most parents of students at SB Pandan Indah are Indonesian migrant workers who have limited time to accompany their children's learning activities at home. This condition affects the reinforcement of Islamic Religious Education materials and the habituation of religious practices within the family environment. As a result, students' religious development becomes highly dependent on the learning process and religious activities provided by the school. Consequently, the reinforcement of materials learned at school, Qur'anic reading habits, implementation of religious practices, and internalization of Islamic values cannot be optimally strengthened within the family environment. In fact, the family represents the first and primary educational environment that plays an essential role in shaping children's personality, character, and religiosity from an early age. Limited parental involvement causes students' religious development to rely more heavily on the educational guidance and religious habituation provided by the school (Mulyani, 2023).

Children of Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) living abroad face challenges in obtaining optimal religious education due to limited interaction and communication with their parents. Under these circumstances, schools function not only as institutions for knowledge transfer but also as centers for character development, religious habituation, and strengthening students' religious identity. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education teachers are required to provide more intensive guidance and support to ensure that students continue to receive continuous and meaningful religious development.

3. The Influence of the Social Environment and Digital Technology

The multicultural social environment and the use of digital media significantly influence the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Extensive access to information provides valuable opportunities for students to broaden their knowledge; however, it also creates challenges due to the availability of diverse religious information that may not always align with the understanding and teachings provided by schools. In addition, excessive use of digital devices may negatively affect students' concentration and learning motivation. In fact, the family represents the first and primary educational institution that plays an essential role in developing children's religious character through exemplary behavior, habituation, supervision, and continuous communication. When the educational function of the family is not optimally fulfilled, schools assume a greater responsibility in shaping students' religious knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Mulyani, 2023).

1. Parental involvement has a significant influence on the success of religious education and students' character development. Parents who actively accompany their children's learning activities, encourage religious practices, and provide

spiritual motivation tend to contribute positively to their children's spiritual, moral, and academic development. Conversely, limited parental time due to occupational demands reduces the intensity of interaction between parents and children, resulting in the responsibility for religious habituation being largely transferred to schools. Therefore, strong collaboration between schools and families is required to ensure that religious education continues consistently, even when communication and interaction are facilitated through digital media (Alfiyanto et al., 2024).

2. In addition to family factors, the social environment also plays a significant role in shaping students' religious development. A positive social environment can encourage students to develop religious habits, participate in religious activities, and apply Islamic values in their daily lives. Conversely, an unfavorable social environment may influence students' behavior, reducing their motivation to learn about religion and practice religious teachings. Therefore, the development of religious character requires collaboration among families, schools, and communities as three complementary centers of education that collectively contribute to students' moral and spiritual growth (Hatiah & Muslimah, 2024).

3. Limitations of Learning Facilities and Instructional Media

The study also found that supporting facilities for Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning remain limited, particularly digital-based learning media and teaching materials that are appropriate to the characteristics of Indonesian diaspora students. This condition encourages teachers to develop simple instructional media and utilize various available learning resources to ensure that the learning process continues effectively. These limitations pose challenges for teachers in delivering materials in an engaging and interactive manner, particularly for topics requiring visualization, demonstration, and repeated practice, such as Qur'anic learning, religious practices, and Islamic morals (*akhlaq*).

Limited facilities not only affect the effectiveness of material delivery but also influence students' motivation and engagement in the learning process. Therefore, the availability of relevant learning media is an important factor in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education in the digital era (Patmawati et al., 2026). Islamic Religious Education teachers are required to develop learning media independently by utilizing available information technology. Various studies have demonstrated that the use of instructional videos, interactive presentations, learning applications, digital quizzes, and simple multimedia resources can enhance students' learning motivation, participation, and understanding of religious materials. However, the effectiveness of these media is strongly influenced by teachers' digital competence as well as the availability of adequate school facilities and infrastructure. Therefore, improving teachers' ability to develop technology-based learning media has become a crucial requirement in contemporary Islamic Religious Education (Noviansyah et al., 2024). .

Teachers' Efforts in Overcoming Learning Challenges To address these challenges, teachers implement flexible learning strategies based on students' abilities, provide gradual guidance, utilize digital media as learning resources, and establish intensive communication with parents regarding students' learning progress. In

addition, the school promotes religious habituation activities, such as Qur'anic recitation, collective prayers, and moral development programs, as part of strengthening Islamic Religious Education. In this implementation, teachers act as facilitators who provide guidance, feedback, and meaningful learning experiences, enabling students to actively construct knowledge and develop their religious skills.

This approach has been shown to increase student engagement while accommodating differences in students' abilities within the classroom (Saifullah et al., 2026). Teachers also provide gradual assistance (**scaffolding**) to students who experience difficulties in Qur'anic reading, understanding Islamic teachings, and performing religious practices. This support is provided through individual guidance, small-group learning, repeated instruction, and exercises tailored to each student's ability level. Such an approach enables students to obtain more personalized learning experiences, thereby reducing gaps in learning abilities. Thus, teachers do not merely function as transmitters of knowledge but also as mentors who continuously support students' academic and spiritual development. Furthermore, teachers utilize digital media as learning resources to enhance the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education. The use of instructional videos, interactive multimedia, digital Qur'an applications, online learning platforms, and presentation media has been shown to increase learning motivation, strengthen students' understanding of religious concepts, and encourage active participation in the learning process.

Nevertheless, the success of digital media utilization is highly dependent on teachers' digital competence, students' readiness, and the availability of school facilities and infrastructure. Therefore, teachers are required to continuously develop their digital competencies so that technology can be effectively utilized as a learning medium while remaining oriented toward the cultivation of Islamic values (Patmawati et al., 2026). Beyond classroom instruction, the school implements various religious activities as part of strengthening Islamic Religious Education, including Qur'anic recitation before lessons, collective prayers, congregational prayers, short religious lectures (*kultum*), and moral development activities in daily life.

These habituation programs aim to internalize Islamic values through direct experiences, allowing students not only to understand religious concepts cognitively but also to apply them in their attitudes and behaviors. Previous studies indicate that consistent religious habituation can strengthen students' religious character, improve discipline, and develop sustainable positive behaviors. Therefore, the success of Islamic Religious Education is not determined solely by intracurricular learning processes but also by the religious culture that is systematically developed within the school environment.

DISCUSSION

Sekolah Bimbingan (SB) Pandan Indah**, Kuala Lumpur, has been conducted in accordance with its educational objectives, namely to develop students who possess religious knowledge, demonstrate good moral character, and are able to practice

Islamic teachings in their daily lives. However, its implementation continues to face various challenges influenced by the characteristics of diaspora students, environmental conditions, and limitations within the learning process. One of the major challenges identified is the variation in students' foundational religious knowledge.

Differences in educational backgrounds and family environments have resulted in diverse levels of Qur'anic reading ability, understanding of religious materials, and competence in performing religious practices among students. This condition requires teachers to implement more adaptive and differentiated learning approaches so that all students have equal opportunities to learn according to their individual needs. Such an approach is essential for creating an inclusive learning environment that accommodates students' diverse abilities. Limited instructional time also represents a significant challenge in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education.

The available time allocation is not fully sufficient to accommodate both the delivery of learning materials and the optimal implementation of religious practices and moral development activities. In fact, IRE learning is not merely oriented toward conceptual understanding but also emphasizes the habituation of religious values through continuous practice. Therefore, effective instructional strategies are required to ensure that learning objectives can still be achieved despite limited instructional time.

This study also demonstrates that parental involvement has a significant influence on the success of Islamic Religious Education. Most students' parents are Indonesian migrant workers who have limited time to accompany their children in learning activities at home. Consequently, religious habituation and reinforcement of materials taught at school do not always receive optimal support within the family environment. These findings highlight that successful religious education requires continuous collaboration between schools and families through intensive communication and consistent parental support.

Furthermore, the development of digital technology and the social environment in the host country also influences the learning process. Easy access to digital media provides opportunities for students to obtain various sources of religious information; however, it may also lead to misconceptions when the information accessed does not originate from credible and authoritative sources. On the other hand, excessive use of digital devices may reduce students' learning concentration and social interaction. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy has become an essential component of Islamic Religious Education to enable students to utilize technology wisely and responsibly in accordance with Islamic values.



Gambar 1. Salah Satu Mahasiswa Sedang Mengajarkan Kegiatan Praktik Ibadah dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam

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To overcome these challenges, teachers at Sekolah Bimbingan (SB) Pandan Indah, Kuala Lumpur implement various strategies, including adapting learning activities to students' abilities, utilizing digital learning media, providing gradual guidance, and developing religious habituation programs within the school environment. In addition, the school strengthens communication with parents to support students' character development and religious practices at home. These strategies demonstrate that the success of Islamic Religious Education does not solely depend on teachers' competence but also on family support, the school environment, and collaboration among all stakeholders involved in the educational process.

Based on the research findings, it can be understood that the challenges in implementing Islamic Religious Education among diaspora students at SB Pandan Indah, Kuala Lumpur, are complex and influenced by various internal and external factors. Therefore, sustainable efforts are required through improving teacher competence, strengthening collaboration between schools and parents, utilizing technology in a positive manner, and providing adequate learning facilities. Consequently, Islamic Religious Education in diaspora educational settings is expected to produce students who possess strong religious understanding, demonstrate noble character, and are able to practice Islamic values in their daily lives despite living within a multicultural environment.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at Sekolah Bimbingan (SB) Pandan Indah, Kuala Lumpur has been carried out effectively; however, it still faces several challenges, including differences in students' foundational religious knowledge, limited instructional time, insufficient parental support, the influence of the social environment and digital technology, as well as limitations in learning facilities and instructional media. These challenges affect the effectiveness of achieving the objectives of Islamic Religious Education among diaspora students.

To address these challenges, teachers implement adaptive learning strategies based on students' abilities, provide gradual guidance, utilize digital learning media, and strengthen communication with parents. In addition, the school promotes various religious habituation activities as efforts to strengthen students' religious character. Therefore, the success of Islamic Religious Education among diaspora students requires strong synergy between schools, families, and the surrounding environment to ensure that the objectives of religious education can be achieved optimally.

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