

Challenges in Competency Development of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in the Context of Education in Underdeveloped Regions: A Study on Senior High Schools in Papua

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ABSTRACT. Research on the development of professional competencies among Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers is still largely dominated by studies from regions with relatively adequate access to education. In contrast, peripheral regions such as Papua, which present geographical and social complexities, have not yet received much in-depth attention. The main purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the key structural, infrastructural, and cultural challenges that influence the competency development process of IRE teachers. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a phenomenological method, through field observations and in-depth interviews with IRE teachers at three senior high schools in the City of Jayapura. Study results show that IRE teachers face structural challenges in the form of education policy that does not align and less accommodating to local conditions; infrastructural challenges in the form of limited facilities, technology, and financial support; as well as cultural challenges that include the low level of appreciation to the role of religious education teachers and dominance of local values that do not support education innovation. The main finding of this study indicates that the development of professional competency among Islamic Religious Education teachers in Papua is hindered by interconnected structural, infrastructural, and cultural challenges, thereby necessitating a holistic and contextually grounded approach to teacher capacity building.

Keywords: *Teacher competency, Islamic Religious Education, Senior High School.*

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INTRODUCTION

The challenges Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers encounter at senior high schools (sekolah menengah atas/SMA) in Papua to develop competency are crucial issues that require serious attention. Despite continued efforts to improve the quality of education, IRE teachers at Papuan SMA are still facing obstacles in improving their competency (Aziz et al., 2025). A report from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia: 2019) states that the majority of teachers in the Papua region have not had sufficient training to improve their competencies and pedagogical process. In the same light, (Allen et al., 2018; Arif et al., 2025; Fauzi et al., 2025) also reiterate that teachers in Papua Province are one of the most marginalized in teacher's training and skills acquisition and often rank very low due to the lack of preparation. In other words, teachers in Papua Province often lack sufficient access resulting in their limited

teaching skills. As a consequence, mapping out the challenges IRE teachers face is crucial in order to understand their specific needs and reinforce the quality of education (Aisah et al., 2025; Amalia, 2025).

Islamic religious education teachers are actors that play a vital role in the education system. This is because IRE teachers not only teach religious knowledge, but they also shape learners moral character (Muhammad, Ruswandi, Nurmila, & Zakiyah, 2023; Rachman, Kawakip, Fadhillah, Saputra, & Zulkifli, 2023; Sirojuddin, Kartiko, & Ma'arif, 2025; Wasehudin et al., 2024). IRE teachers, as elaborated by (Radino & Permatasari, 2022), function as agents in establishing spirituality for students to implement Islamic teachings in a practical manner in their daily life. In their study, (Rimadani, Rizki, & Sa'adah, 2024) state that teacher's competencies in pedagogical, professional, social, and personal aspects are key requisites for them to be able to provide holistic and sustainable education. In the same tune, (Marshall 2018) also emphasize that without professional development and cross sectoral collaboration, any attempt at improving the quality of religious education shall remain hampered. Accordingly, IRE teachers hold a vital role in directing students to become pious individuals possessing good morals, while also assuming a role as key actors in improving education quality at school.

To date, studies that discuss the challenges of IRE teachers in the the context of education merely focus on three aspects. First, studies that discuss the role of IRE teachers in shaping student characters and its impact on religious values at school (Jasiah et al. 2024; Komariah and Nihayah 2023; Taufik 2020). Second, studies that mostly highlight effective and innovative methodologies in IRE learning for improving student's understanding of religious materials (Aseery 2024; Chanifah et al. 2021; Ma'arif et al. 2025; Panjwani and Revell 2018). Third, studies that accentuate the impacts religious education policy and curriculum have on the quality of IRE teaching in public schools (Guna et al. 2024; Huriyah et al. 2025; Kartiko et al. 2025; Lafararchi 2020). Upon observation of these three aspects, it is apparent that the existing studies only focus on the teacher's role in building character, application of teaching methodologies, and curriculum policy implementation. In other words, the challenges IRE teachers face in improving their competencies, particularly in the context of developing competencies and professionalism, have yet to become a primary focus of previously conducted studies.

The current article is aimed at filling in the gap of prior studies that have not comprehensively discuss the challenges critical challenges Islamic Religious Education teachers encounter in improving competencies, especially in the Papua region. This study focuses on mapping out the structural, infrastructural, and cultural factors that contribute to the challenges IRE teachers face. (Adimayuda et al. 2025; Varas et al. 2023) also explicate that understanding the challenges teachers face may help them in formulating effective strategies to improve their competencies. In other words, aside from analyzing the factors that inhibit IRE teachers to improve their competency, this study also discusses strategic measures that can be carried out to address them. Such a context is considered by (Nasution, Paulus, and Iskarina 2023; Sriyanto, Suyatno, and Ishafit 2026) to focus on professional development of IRE teachers and enhancement of Islamic religious education quality at school. Through this understanding, we can see that identifying the challenges teachers face is an important first step to find the right solution to improve competency and teaching quality. IRE teacher competencies in Indonesia are multidimensional and shaped by socio-cultural and infrastructural contexts, with urban teachers generally outperforming those in non-urban areas in communication, empathy, and collaboration (Handayani et al. 2024).

This study is based upon the argument that structural, infrastructural, and cultural challenges faced by IRE teachers in Papua to improve their competency is an urgent issue that requires holistic solutions. The obstacles they encounter in improving competency is not only a sectoral issue, they also reflect how collaborations between the government, education institutions, and teachers' community failed to be established. The lack of synergy among these three institutions has resulted in the difficulty of improving the quality of religious education in the Papua region. Without solid collaboration, efforts to improve teachers' competencies will continue to be

hampered and religious education in the region will not develop optimally. The core issue is the limited effectiveness of competency development for IRE teachers in Papua, driven by unresolved structural, infrastructural, and cultural barriers and further hindered by weak collaboration among key stakeholders. Therefore, an integrated and collaborative approach from all stakeholders is required, including provision of facilities, improved trainings, and reinforcement of community support. Given such measures in place, improving the competencies of IRE teachers in Papua can be done more effectively and the quality of education in this region can be further enhanced for the sake of achieving more inclusive and equitable education goals.

Theoretically, this article draws on Thomas Guskey's theory of teacher professional development (Guskey, 2002). This theory offers a multi-level evaluation framework that encompasses five key aspects: teacher reactions, learning, organizational support, implementation of practices, and student learning outcomes. This model emphasizes that the success of professional development must be oriented toward improving student learning outcomes, not merely increasing teachers' knowledge. Furthermore, this data-driven approach demonstrates that changes in teachers' beliefs tend to follow evidence of successful classroom practices (Rodgers et al., 2022). In various contexts, such as technology integration and curriculum development, the effectiveness of this model heavily depends on sustained support and professional collaboration (Cortes et al., 2024; Govender & Juggernath, 2025). However, its implementation is often hindered by time constraints, heavy workloads, and weak institutional support (Rahmi & Rasanjani, 2025). Overall, Guskey's theory provides a comprehensive framework for designing, implementing, and evaluating teacher professional development programs with a focus on tangible impacts on student learning.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method based on the analytical approach developed by Miles and Huberman to analyze and describe the challenges faced by Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in improving their competencies in Jayapura City (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The study was carried out in three senior high schools, i.e., Public Senior High School 1 of Jayapura (SMAN 1 Jayapura), Public Vocational High School 3 of Jayapura (SMKN 3 Jayapura), and Muhammadiyah Senior High School of Jayapura City (SMAMJA). These three schools were selected as they represent the various educational settings found in the City of Jayapura, in terms of existing facilities and infrastructure, management quality, and cultural background that affect the education process. In this case, SMAN 1 Jayapura has more complete facilities. SMKN 3 Jayapura focuses on vocational education, which requires teachers to have special competencies. Meanwhile, SMAMJA has a cultural background that is more heavily imbued with Islamic values. As such, these three senior high schools pose complex challenges to IRE teachers. Such variations help this study to reveal different challenges thereby making it possible to produce more comprehensive understanding of IRE teacher competency development in varying school contexts.

The present study relied on primary and secondary data (Auberlet et al. 2014). Primary data were obtained through direct observations and in-depth interviews with informants, particularly IRE teachers in the three schools. Interviews were conducted to explore in-depth understanding of the challenges IRE teachers face in improving their competencies. Meanwhile, secondary data in the study were acquired from books, journal articles, and websites relevant to this topic of study. A combination of these two sources were used to provide a comprehensive description about the conditions that IRE teachers encounter on the field as well as the factors that have an effect on their efforts at improving competencies. The data collection was done through systematic field observations followed by in-depth interviews. Five IRE teachers from the three schools were interviewed in order to gain an understanding of their experience regarding the structural, infrastructural, and cultural challenges they face in improving their competencies. They were selected based on the duration of time as a teacher and has experience in participating in training organized by the education department and the Papuan Ministry of Religious Affairs. Once data

were collected, they were subsequently categorized into three dimensions, i.e., structural challenges (school structure and policy), infrastructural challenges (facilities and infrastructure), and cultural challenges (support from school and surrounding environment).

Collected data were analyzed using the (Miles et al., 2014) model, which involved three main stages. First, data reduction was done to simplify and focus on informants relevant to the research objective. Second, data presentation was carried out by organizing information in a systematic manner in order to facilitate in drawing conclusions. Third, drawing conclusion or verification was done by analyzing patterns, causal relations, and configurations that emerge from the data to identify the key challenges IRE teachers face. The conclusion was continuously verified throughout the research process to ensure data validity. This aligns with the framework articulated by (Moustakas, 1994), wherein data reduction is undertaken by concentrating exclusively on the central topic and guiding research questions. Each initial statement is treated as having equal analytical weight, with redundant and overlapping expressions subsequently removed. The remaining statements are then organized into coherent meaning units based on emergent topics or themes, culminating in the development of a refined textual description. Ultimately, the data analysis produced IRE teachers' understanding about improving their competencies in the City of Jayapura, which can serve as a basis of recommendation for developing a more effective program for teachers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The study findings revealed structural, infrastructural, and cultural challenges that respectively have significant impacts on IRE teachers' ability to adapt and develop their competencies in the process of teaching Islamic religion in Papuan senior high schools. These three challenges are further discussed below.

Structural challenges

Structural challenges are an inhibiting factor that make it difficult for IRE teachers in Papua to develop their competencies. One of the structural challenges can be observed through regulations that do not accommodate the interest of teachers in remote areas, such as policies that give little support to equal distribution of resources and insufficient access to trainings. Such conditions have a direct impact on the limited opportunities that IRE teachers in Papua have to improve their competencies. This situation is reflected in the statement made by MT, an IRE teacher of a senior high school in Papua:

“The obstacle that we often face is regarding the regulation. Currently, the existing policy and regulation do not accommodate the teacher's interest, especially IRE teachers in Papua. One of them is that trainings for improving teacher competency are frequently held in the provincial capital and even in Jakarta. For us, teachers who live in Papua, this is a big problem because in addition to requiring more costs for transportation, the time needed to participate in the training would be longer as well. So, many teachers eventually chose not to join the training” (MT, personal communication).

A similar point was conveyed by AH, an official within the Papua Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, who stated that:

“The activities conducted thus far remain limited to workshops and training sessions. These initiatives have only been in place for approximately one year, and therefore the types of training implemented have remained relatively uniform. Our activities are also carried out by moving from one location to another, depending on which areas are accessible to us. We have only been able to implement programs in locations we can reach, and we have not yet extended our efforts to more remote areas.” (AH, personal communication).

The limitations of activities were also acknowledged by WJ from the Papua Province Religious Education and Training Center (BDK), who said:

“The types of training activities that we have been using so far are workshops and discussions. So, that is all we have been doing. We have not conducted any other training activities for teachers.” (WJ, personal communication).

The statement MT, AH, and JW expressed describes the actual challenge IRE teachers in Papua face, and this is often overlooked in education policy and regulation, which should have been equally supporting competency development of teachers. Aside from regulations that do not accommodate the interest of teachers in Papua, especially in remote areas, the implementation of activities is still limited, another structural challenge is caused by overlapping central and regional regulations, resulting in unsynchronized implementation of education policy. Such a condition is apparent based on the statement delivered by BR who said that:

“One of the problems that has not yet been properly resolved is unaligned regulations between central and regional governments. The central government often require teachers to participate in training and certification activities to support the competencies of teachers here. But in the region, the existing policy does not support the implementation of these programs. There is also (program) implementation by the central government already using the new regulation, but the regional government is still using the old regulation. We are confused” (BR, personal communication)

The statement above indicates how regulatory disharmony had led to IRE teachers in Papua facing difficulties of gaining benefits from programs that could improve their competencies. Structural challenges can also be perceived through frequent change in regulation every time there is a change in heads of government or region. The impact of such change in regulation can also be observed in the statement expressed by MT below.

“The problems that IRE teachers here face is more about the difficulty of adjustment. We find it hard to adjust our selves to everything because the regulation often changes, even more so when there is administrative change, surely the policy for teachers changes as well. So, ongoing programs may suddenly be discontinued due to changes in the regulation issued by the government. Not only the learning program, programs that support teachers also change” (MT, personal communication).

Structural challenges have resulted in various obstacles for IRE teachers in Papua. In addition to non-accommodating regulations, frequently changing and overlapping regulations are also aspects that complicate the conditions of IRE teachers in Papua. Unalignment between central and regional government policies often lead to suboptimal implementation of teacher’s competency development programs or even difficulties in implementing them. These factors have made enhancing education quality in Papua a significant challenge for IRE teachers.

Infrastructural challenges

Infrastructural challenges have resulted in various difficulties for IRE teachers in Papua. Such conditions are apparent through the limited number of facilities and infrastructure in the process of teacher competency development, including access to trainings. This is reflected in the statement conveyed by ZA who said that:

“To be honest, if you ask me about facilities or infrastructure, the conditions are still far from ideal. Many IRE teachers here even feel they are left out in terms of technology. Indeed, the reality is that there are still a lot of teachers here who have not had any contact at all with internet and technology. So, we as teachers still find it very difficult operating the technology. Additionally, schools here also do not have good facilities and infrastructure. Many schools are still lacking computers and internet. We here have to work really hard to find a way to keep growing” (ZA, personal communication).

The challenges IRE teachers in Papua encounter are not only caused by the lack of infrastructure and support in their attempt at improving teacher’s skills, but also in the lack of appreciation to teachers in Papua. This condition is reflected in the amount of salary that is not commensurate with the workload and responsibility that they have to bear, hence reducing their motivation to continue to grow and optimally contribute to education. Such situation can also be described by the following statement made by AH as follows:

“Speaking about teacher’s salary here, it is actually far from enough. Especially given the extremely high level of workload. Some IRE teachers even have to teach in three other schools in order to meet their daily needs. Even worse is that the salary and benefits are often times late. What we do with maximum efforts are sometimes not yet given an equal amount of appreciation” (AH, personal communication).

The statement above indicates a fundamental issue regarding the support given for competency development of IRE teachers in Papua. Infrastructural challenges are also visible in the form of poor access, i.e., limited internet connection that hinders implementation of training and online learning. Such lack of access can also be illustrated by the statement that BR made as follows:

“I often hear that there are training programs for teachers but there are many obstacles to be able to join. The most obvious issue is indeed cost. The school does not have any funding for teachers to participate in trainings because the school’s focus is to develop its facilities and infrastructure. Additionally, I would often receive information that’s already overdue from the school, so when I intended to register the time was nearly up” (BR, personal communication).

Infrastructural challenges have resulted in various obstacles to IRE teachers in Papua. Aside from the lack of infrastructure and support in enhancing teacher’s skills, poor internet access is also an influential factor that complicates the circumstances of IRE teachers in Papua. Limited internet network makes online training implementation suboptimal, even difficult to follow for many teachers located in remote areas. These three factors are substantial challenges that IRE teachers need to face in order to enhance the quality of education in Papua.

Cultural challenges

Cultural challenges have led to various difficulties for IRE teachers in Papua. Such conditions can be observed in the dominance that local community members have over certain religious teachings. This is shown by the statement ET conveyed, as follows:

“In Papua, people still strongly uphold and implement religious traditions making it difficult at times for them to accept the new approaches we bring to school. One of them is when we teach IRE with a more inclusive perspective that is in line with the national curriculum, some of the students’ parents reject them and ask that we continue teaching using the old way. This is also the reason why many IRE teachers are reluctant to participate in trainings because they are worried that the religious teachings and values we convey wouldn’t align with the parents’ desires” (ET, personal communication).

The statement ET made describes the dominance that locals have over certain religious teachings. In addition to such dominance, there is also the assumption that religion teachers play an insignificant role compared to teachers of other subjects. Such situation is apparent through the following statement made by ZA:

“I feel that IRE teachers here are not considered important. Many still think that teachers of religion are not as important as teachers of other subjects like mathematics and science. Indeed, there are still many who assume that the subject of religion is only a formality, it’s only a complementary subject because religion is already taught at home by the parents, but actually, I personally think that it’s very important especially in building student’s character. Since we meet them every day, so we are able to little by little teach them moral and spiritual values” (ZA, personal communication).

The statement above suggests disharmony between the belief of the local majority and the religious teachings taught by IRE teachers. Cultural challenges are also apparent from the low level of appreciation given to religion teachers, who are often perceived as less important compared to teachers of other subjects. This low level of appreciation is also illustrated in the statement mentioned by AH as follows:

“I think that the role of IRE teachers in schools is extremely important. Because we not only teach religious values but we also shape student morality to make it better. But, yes, in terms of appreciation, I think it is still lacking. Salary, benefits, and opportunities, they are still very minimal. Especially because currently, everyone is focused on lessons of science, which is considered the standard to be able to enter the professional world. So, yes, parents also prefer their children to get more science lessons than religion, which they can teach directly at home. So, indeed there are a lot more opportunities for science teachers than us. I feel that there is still little appreciation shown toward IRE teachers.” (AH, personal communication).

Cultural challenges have caused various difficulties for IRE teachers in Papua. Aside from the dominance of the opposing local belief, the lack of appreciation toward religion teachers and the assumption that the role of religion teachers is not as important are inhibiting factors in efforts to enhance the quality of IRE teachers. These three factors limit IRE teachers' mobility to maximize their role in teaching and in improving their competencies, thereby undermining the influence that religious education has in community and school environment.

Discussion

The challenges encountered by IRE teachers in Papua have led to various obstacles in improving the quality of competency of teachers. These obstacles are clearly apparent as shown by the three key findings in the current study. *First*, the structural challenges emerged as a result of frequently overlapping and non-accommodating regulations that restrict teacher's flexibility in carrying out their tasks. *Second*, infrastructural challenges include lack of access to education facilities and training that ultimately hampers teacher's professional development. *Third*, cultural challenges, encompassing domination of local belief and lack of appreciation to the role that religion teachers hold, make it even more difficult to implement teacher competency development programs. These three challenges show that centralization of the education system has exacerbated the situation by neglecting local culture and social context (Chande, 2023; Harpiani Et Al., 2025; Kardi Et Al., 2023; Nursyifa Et Al., 2026; Ramadhan Et Al., 2025). Accordingly, education policy that does not align with local needs may create discrepancy in improving teacher's competencies.

The study indicates that the challenges experienced by IRE teachers in Papua in improving their competencies are worsened by centralized education, which gives little attention to local contexts. (Kosim et al. 2023) also argue that education policies often overlook the specific needs of remote areas thereby widening the gap of access to professional development and training for teachers in regions located far from the policy center. In other words, an overly uniformed approach to national education had hindered IRE teachers in Papua to obtain trainings that are relevant and adapted to the local socio-cultural conditions. This argument is also buttressed by (Maher and Prescott 2017) by stating that teachers in remote areas face professional isolation that significantly limit opportunities for professional development and collaborations. This is why centralized education is a key factor in causing difficulties for IRE teachers in Papua to develop and enhance their competencies.

The challenges IRE teachers face have broad implications to education development in the Papua region. These challenges not only have the potential to impede development of teachers' competencies, but there are significant impacts on the teachers' welfare as well. (Muremela et al. 2023) also reiterate that unequal access to professional training in remote regions worsens teachers' socio-economic conditions, creates frustrations, and reduces work motivation. If such conditions were allowed to continue, the impacts could get even worse, including a rise in the number of teacher's resignation and a drop in the quality of education students receive. Education discrepancy may also have a domino effect on aspects of teacher's well-being (Pasani, Amelia, and Hassan 2020; Rahayu et al. 2023; Zheng, Qi, and Zhang 2023). In the same light, (Pozo-Rico et al. 2023) also argue that education quality is strongly affected by the teacher's well-being because teachers who feel neither appreciated nor empowered through trainings will find it difficult to teach and provide quality education. Accordingly, paying attention to aspects of well-being is a key measure to drive successful religious education in Papua region, and it also enhances teachers' motivation and dedication in teaching.

This study is unlike previous studies discussing the challenges faced by IRE teachers in remote regions, which tend to examine the role of teachers in character building, application of teaching methods, and implementation of curriculum policy (Afriyanto and Anandari 2024; Asfiati et al. 2023; Mahmud et al. 2023). Prior studies are more focused on the disparity of teachers' academic qualifications and the lack of resources like textbooks and technologies used for learning. However, this study found deeper and more complex structural, infrastructural, and cultural

challenges. In the same line, (Rhodes and Beneicke 2003; Şahin, Soylu, and Jafari 2024) also revealed that in underdeveloped regions, the challenges teachers face are not only access issues, but they are also troubled by limitations in the local education system and local culture that provides little support to teachers' professional development. This is apparent from the lack of government support in improving education facilities and teacher's training, as well as evident norms and customs among the community that hinder IRE teachers' innovative initiatives.

The study reaffirms that improving the competence of religious teachers in Papua faces a range of interconnected structural, cultural, and infrastructural challenges. These include limited school facilities, insufficient teaching materials, and inadequate technological resources that hinder effective learning processes (Aprilianto, Majid, and Kartiko 2025; Werang, Wea, and Wolomasi 2022), as well as the low level of technological literacy among teachers, which is increasingly essential in modern education (Lumban Tobing et al. 2026). This condition is compounded by the limited availability of professional development opportunities for teachers. Another significant challenge lies in the uniform national curriculum policy, which often overlooks local diversity, resulting in ineffective implementation of the curriculum, including the Independent Curriculum, due to insufficient support and resources (Efriandi, Couwenberg, and Holzhacker 2019; Lumban Tobing et al. 2026). From a sociocultural perspective, the misalignment between the curriculum and Papua's cultural context, along with the need to enhance teachers' interreligious competence, poses further obstacles to developing inclusive learning environments (Butarbutar 2025; Utami 2022). Within the cultural context, weak administrative support from schools and low parental involvement further exacerbate efforts to improve the quality of religious education.

Islamic religion teachers often face difficulties in integrating technology into the learning process. This is due to traditional paradigms, a lack of technology-based training, and low motivation to participate in such training (Posangi et al. 2025; Winoto 2022). In fact, teachers often show resistance to new learning methods, such as flipped learning or technology-based approaches, which could enhance their pedagogical skills (Wang 2017). Under such circumstances, it is understandable that challenges stem from within the teachers themselves, leading to the failure of various efforts made to improve their competencies.

Based on the study findings, a number of strategic measures need to be formulated and applied to address the challenges IRE teachers face in developing their competencies in underdeveloped regions. *First*, accommodating and bottom-up policies are necessary, wherein central and regional governments need to listen to the aspirations and needs of local schools and teachers when formulating these policies. *Second*, we recommend the implementation of sustainable training programs aligned with local needs and geographical conditions of underdeveloped regions. *Third*, policies that support bureaucratic flexibility for developing teacher's competencies need to be made in order to provide teachers with ample space to participate in self-development programs. Fourth, engaging local communities in the education process is paramount in creating culture that supports learning and innovation. Lastly, periodic evaluation of training programs and education policies in underdeveloped regions should be done in order to ensure their effectiveness. Implementation of these measures are expected to significantly improve IRE teachers' competencies and create a more conducive learning environment in underdeveloped regions.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals an important lesson: despite efforts to improve the competencies of IRE teachers in Papua, the reality on the ground indicates the existence of more complex and multidimensional challenges. Structural, infrastructural, and cultural challenges reflect the complexity of the issues faced by IRE teachers in Papua. First, regarding structural aspects, we found a rigid bureaucracy that limits teachers' access to professional development opportunities. Second, infrastructure challenges, such as a lack of learning facilities and access to technology, also pose significant barriers. Third, cultural factors, such as local norms and cultural practices that do not support educational innovation, further exacerbate the current situation. However, the most

significant challenge is the cultural issue. Therefore, it is crucial for all stakeholders to collaborate in creating policies, facilities, and a culture that better support teachers' professional development. This must be a top priority, not only in underdeveloped regions but also within a global context where quality education is distributed equitably.

Theoretically, this study enriches educational research by positioning teacher competency development in peripheral regions within an integrated and multidimensional framework, demonstrating that structural, infrastructural, and cultural barriers function collectively as interlocking constraints that shape teachers' opportunities for professional learning. The findings deepen existing models of teacher capacity building by revealing how bureaucratic rigidity, limited resource availability, and culturally embedded resistance to pedagogical innovation influence the ways Islamic Religious Education teachers negotiate their professional growth in geographically and socio-culturally marginalized contexts. Building on these insights, the study introduces a collaborative, ecosystem-based theoretical model that underscores the importance of coherent partnerships among government agencies, schools, and local communities as an essential foundation for creating sustainable and equitable pathways for teacher competency development in underserved educational settings.

This study has limitations, particularly regarding its research focus, which was limited to only a few high schools in Jayapura City, meaning it may not reflect the overall situation. Similarly, the discussion regarding the role of national policies and local political dynamics which can also influence competency development, has not yet been thoroughly examined. Therefore, further research is needed to expand the scope to include more schools and analyze other factors. Moving forward, research on topics such as the role of digital technology in enhancing the competencies of Islamic religion teachers should be prioritized so that strategies to improve the overall quality of education can be effectively implemented.

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