



Exploring Protective Factors for Resilience among Teachers in Islamic Elementary Schools in Remote Area

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Abstract: Teachers in private Islamic elementary schools in remote areas of Indonesia play a crucial role in the country's education system, showing remarkable resilience despite the challenges posed by their locations. This study explores the factors contributing to their resilience and its impact on teaching effectiveness. Using qualitative methods, data from ten teachers were gathered through in-depth interviews and observations. The study identified three key factors: socially, teachers gain resilience from their respected status in the community, their responsibility as role models, and maintaining a strong sense of responsibility to their religious leaders and alma mater; spiritually, they view their profession as a noble, Allah-blessed calling and an act of worship; and psychologically, positive emotions such as happiness, peace, and job satisfaction strengthen their resilience. Teachers' emotional resilience is seen in their enthusiasm, sincerity, and patience despite limitations and low well-being. The study emphasizes the importance of resilience in enabling these teachers to fulfill their responsibilities and suggests strengthening these resilience factors to support them in their essential roles. Further research could extend these findings to another educational context.

Keywords: protective resilience, psychological well-being, teacher performance, teacher resilience, resilience impact

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INTRODUCTION

The efforts to advance education in Indonesia have not fully addressed the teachers' well-being in remote areas, including in private Islamic elementary schools in remote areas. These teachers face challenges that result in low well-being compared to their urban counterparts. The limited educational facilities and infrastructure present additional teacher problems (Abubakar et al., 2022). It is common for teachers in remote and hard-to-reach areas to shape the students' motivated behavior, which impedes teachers from fulfilling their responsibilities (Ihsan, 2021). Furthermore, limited teachers in remote areas lead to a high workload and burden for Islamic elementary school teachers (Muhammad, 2021). Financially, these private Islamic elementary schools receive small salaries only after harvest (Issom et al., 2017; Henry, 2021; Sucipto, 2021). However, principals, parents, and communities require teachers to have high emotional, physical, and intellectual abilities without adequate social support (Collie, 2022; Korotaj & Mrnjaus, 2020; Tian et al., 2022). For uniqueness, teachers dedicate their efforts to educating their students despite their hardships and obstacles. From a psychological perspective, their behaviors are characterized as teacher resilience, which refers to their ability to overcome adversity and persist in fulfilling their responsibilities (Beltman, 2021; Wang & Lo, 2022).

Resilience is the capacity of a system (individual, family, organization, or society) to adjust to any disturbance that threatens its survival, functioning, and development (Abubakar et al., 2022; Masten, 2019; Macrae & Wiig, 2019). Teacher resilience is understood as a capacity, a process, and an outcome of their educator role (Mansfield & Beltman, 2019). As a capability, resilience is a personal and contextual resource that teachers utilize to confront and manage adversity. Resilience is a dynamic process in which each teacher's personal and professional traits interact with challenges over time as they employ various strategies. Moreover, resilient teachers may experience increased professional engagement, growth, dedication, happiness, and well-being. According to several definitions, teacher resilience is (1) a teacher's ability to adapt positively and thrive in the face of challenging or stressful situations and (2) a teacher's capability to maintain control over thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors under challenging conditions, allowing them to remain focused on positive feelings, such as happiness, pride, and accomplishment. Teacher resiliency is crucial to students' learning (Gu & Day, 2013). First, a teacher is the primary role model for their students to have a resilient character; therefore, it is impossible to expect children to be robust (resilient) if the teacher has qualified resilience. Second, teaching is a very dynamic, intricate, and demanding profession. Teacher resilience is crucial to maintaining enthusiasm and passion for the job, as it is usual for teaching to be a dull and stressful job. Thirdly, resilience is an individual's

capacity to quickly recover and regain spirit and strength in facing problems, obstacles, and challenges. Resilience in teaching is closely tied to self-efficacy and motivation in teaching, which is crucial for enhancing academic achievement and other aspects of student life (Hascher et al., 2021). These three reasons demonstrate that teacher resiliency is an essential advantage for learning professionalism and influencing the outcome of an effective educational process.

The findings from studies on Islamic elementary school teachers in remote areas reveal at least three main trends. First, the studies tend to focus more on the professional development of teachers, illustrating how teachers in remote areas face difficulties in accessing education and training for their professional growth (Astuti, 2016). Second, teachers in remote areas often struggle with inadequate internet access, which hinders their ability to conduct online classes effectively. This issue is exacerbated by teachers' lack of digital proficiency (Dewi & Palupi, 2023; Rashed & Hanipah, 2022). Third, teachers are trying to develop and implement teaching strategies applicable in remote areas (Sallima & Romadlon, 2023; Surahman, 2022). However, existing studies have not paid sufficient attention to how Islamic elementary school teachers in remote areas demonstrate resilience in teaching amidst limited conditions and significant challenges, such as minimal access to technology, training, and low compensation.

Research on the resilience of Islamic elementary school teachers, particularly in remote areas of Indonesia, remains limited. Several existing studies have attempted to highlight this topic, although their focus has not been comprehensive. For instance, Nurwidodo et al. (2017) examine the development of madrasah ibtidaiyah teachers in Madura Island, paying attention to how these teachers endure under challenging conditions. Another study by Sudirman (2020) conducted a study on the impact of teacher resilience on the sense of meaning in life among madrasa ibtdaiya teachers in Polewali Mandar. These two studies primarily concentrated on resilience and its effects on the life quality of madrasa teachers in remote areas. Both studies primarily focused on the resilience of teachers and how it influences their quality of life in remote areas. However, these studies have yet to explore the specific factors contributing to teacher resilience in the face of significant challenges. Therefore, further research is crucial to investigate the underlying reasons behind the high resilience demonstrated by these madrasah teachers, who continue to pursue their teaching profession despite facing numerous obstacles, such as limited access, difficult working conditions, and low compensation.

The study aims to enhance the current understanding of private Islamic elementary school teachers in remote areas by adopting a dual perspective. Firstly, it seeks to identify the key factors that shape the resilience of Islamic school teachers in remote areas. Secondly, it analyzes how teacher resilience influences their ability to fulfill their responsibilities. Both perspectives acknowledge the significance of understanding the determination of private Islamic school teachers in remote areas to preserve the teaching profession despite facing numerous challenges and obstacles. This article is constructed on the premise that teachers in remote areas confront challenges, necessitating their capacity to overcome and adapt to various difficulties while sustaining enthusiasm, commitment, and resilience, referred to as self-resilience (Beltman, 2021). Notably, teacher resilience is not innate but shaped by various factors that influence one's capacity and performance in the workplace (Judilla & Rellon, 2022) and serve as a crucial aspect in determining educational success (Gu & Day, 2013; Luzaan et al., 2023).

METHODS

The private Islamic elementary school teachers encountered in remote Indonesian areas demonstrate unwavering passion and dedication towards their profession despite facing harsh geographical conditions, inadequate learning facilities, and a much lower living standard than teachers in urban areas. This study employed a qualitative methodology with a case study approach to explore the reasons behind teachers' resilience and continued commitment to educating their students (Creswell & Poth, 2007). The case study method was chosen because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of specific, real-world contexts—in this case, the unique experiences of private Islamic elementary school teachers in remote areas (Yin, 2018). By focusing on this group, the case study approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of "how" and "what" aspects of teachers' experiences, providing valuable insights into the complex phenomena, processes, and perspectives involved. This method is well-suited for investigating the antecedent hypothesis regarding the factors contributing to teacher resilience in challenging environments (Chandra & Shang, 2019).

This study involved ten honorary teachers from private Islamic elementary in a rural region of eastern Indonesia and the lower middle socio-economic status. They had accumulated over ten years of teaching experience in remote areas, making them suitable candidates to provide valuable insights into teacher resilience. The respondents' coverage monthly pay was IDR 300,000 to 500,000 (around 20 to 34 U.S. dollars). Sometimes, they received irregular salaries, disbursed every three months while awaiting school operational support funding. Some respondents held side occupations such as farming, commerce, fishing, and motorbike taxi driving. The demographic features of respondents are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of demographic respondents

Respondents (R)	Age	Gender	Years of experience as a teacher	Socio-economic of School
R1	50	M	30	Low
R2	49	F	28	Low
R3	45	F	23	Moderate
R4	45	F	23	Low
R5	39	M	16	Moderate
R6	45	M	24	Moderate
R7	48	F	25	Moderate
R8	51	F	33	Low
R9	50	F	30	Moderate
R10	40	M	15	Low

The researchers were the primary instruments for qualitative research data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2008). It is crucial to clarify the research position within the study for reflexivity. The researchers have extensive experience as educators involved in educational initiatives at schools and universities. In addition, they serve as quality assessor teams for schools and madrasas (Islamic Schools). Interaction with teachers from various urban and remote schools provides valuable insight into the teaching experience of private Islamic elementary school teachers in the Indonesian education system. Interviews were primarily employed for data collection, while indirect observations were used for data triangulation. To present realities accurately, the researchers inquired about the teaching lives of private Islamic elementary school teachers during the interview. The researchers developed an interview guide consisting of one question about the respondent's demographic profile and eight open-ended questions about teacher resilience. Formal and informal interviews with teachers, principals, students, and parents were conducted in person or over the mobile phone and via WhatsApp.

This study employed a method of thematic reflective analysis. The researchers used data analysis procedures, including data recognition (reading the transcripts to comprehend the data) and coding (brief labeling that captures an essential aspect of the research issue). Coding is adaptable and can be inductive, deductive, or hybrid. After the coding had been completed, the initial theme development occurred, followed by a thorough evaluation, revision, and polishing. Each theme was identified and defined, and an analytical narrative was composed. The selection of a thematic reflective methodology was based on adaptability and interpretation, guided by the researchers' experience and research questions. It is an active process that produces implicit and explicit themes (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research objectives regarding teacher resilience, the findings were described according to two subthemes: the elements contributing to teacher resilience and the teachers' resilience performance in their teaching context. This study found that social factors play a significant role in building the resilience of teachers in private Islamic elementary schools in remote areas. One key factor is the high level of respect that the community has for the teaching profession, which makes teachers feel valued and motivated to continue teaching despite their challenges. Several respondents, such as R5, R9, and R4, stated that respect from the local community provides significant moral support. Additionally, according to R7, a good relationship with the headmaster, who is often a kyai or religious leader, strongly impacts their resilience. The kyai is socially and religiously respected, giving teachers a strong role model. Respondents R8 and R10 also affirmed that their resilience is further strengthened when they are alumni of the school where they teach, which fosters a deeper sense of loyalty and emotional connection. Familial ties also play a crucial role; as R3 mentioned, some teachers remain in their positions because they have family ties with the school owner or headmaster. In Indonesia, schools often serve as a means of maintaining family connections, contributing to teachers' resilience. Therefore, social recognition, loyalty to the kyai, alum status, and familial relationships are cultural and social elements that strengthen teachers' resilience in facing the challenges of working in remote areas, enabling them to continue contributing to education. Table 2 summarizes the findings on sociocultural factors as determinants of teacher resilience.

Table 2. Social-culture factors of Teacher resilience

Socio-cultural factor	Examples of respondents' statements
The teacher gets an honorable status in society	"Working as a teacher does not take much money, especially as a private elementary school teacher, but the community values me very much as a teacher by profession. I have always been involved in making important decisions in the community". (R5) "As a teacher, I feel appreciated by the community. I am often trusted to preside over religious ceremonies or community activities". (R9) "My financial situation is middle to lower, but as a teacher, I have an excellent social status". (R4) "By being a teacher, society has placed me as a role model and given me a respectable social status" (R3). "I used to be a student of a kyai, and I taught in this madrasa as a form of devotion to my Kyai." (R7)
Loyalty to kyai/alums of the school at work	"Teaching in the madrasa is not much of a salary. However, I am pleased to fight together and raise this madrasa". (R9) "As a former student of the Islamic boarding school, I have to help the madrasa grow by volunteering to teach without expecting payment". ("10) "From an early age, I was asked to help my close relatives become teachers in this school until now. And I agree because this school is also a relic of our ancestors". (R3)
Kinship	"My parents advised me to help raise this school as a family inheritance; therefore, I remain a teacher in this school even though the salary is small". (R4)

The researchers asked the respondents, "Why do you continue to teach economically less promising subjects in private schools?" The participants responded to the question by stating that their primary reason is due to the adoration of Allah (R1-R10). The respondent (R3) believed that God would appreciate someone who loves knowledge since God likes knowledgeable people. A teacher represents a scholar who imparts the knowledge he learned to his students. Respondents R2, R4, and R6 chose to work as teachers to impart their expertise despite facing many challenges. Some respondents stated that when an individual strives to uphold God's religion, God will suffice his sustenance (R8).

The study results indicated that religion influences teachers' resilience, particularly the conviction that teaching is a form of worship that God values, with a greater reward in this life and the next. Consequently, despite receiving modest salaries and inadequate facilities, teachers in private Islamic elementary schools perceive their profession as a blessing (R7; R10). Even though they receive minimal economic support from schools, they meet their needs (*Barakat*). These beliefs motivate teachers to be patient and truthful despite all challenges. Table 3 summarizes the key findings regarding Spirituality and religious elements in teacher resilience.

Table 3. Factors of spirituality/religiosity of teachers' resilience.

Spirituality/Religiosity factors	Examples of respondents' statements
Teacher as an act of worship to Allah	"I work as a teacher because I want to receive God's blessings". (R1) "It is because God loves the one who studies, and the teacher is the one who helps a person gain knowledge". (R2)
The servant who loves knowledge and love by God	"The teacher is to convey useful knowledge, and as long as that knowledge is utilized, then the person who conveys knowledge will get a reward that continues to flow even though someone has died, and it is an investment in the afterlife." (R6) "I have to teach sincerely, and Allah's decision to provide sustenance for people is furthered". (R7)
The teacher who struggles in the way of Allah and secures His sustenance	"If we uphold the religion of Allah, then Allah will provide unexpected sustenance and convey the knowledge of one of the upholding of the religion of Allah". (R8) "The salary I get as a teacher in a private madrasa ibtida'iya is not much, but I feel the blessing". (R10)

Psychological prosperity plays a significant role in shaping teacher resilience. Psychological well-being, such as teaching satisfaction, feeling appreciated, happiness, and self-efficacy, inspires private Islamic school teachers in remote areas to remain in the profession. All respondents reported being in a state of psychological

well-being despite exhaustion, burnout, and a lower salary; respondents felt content and valued their teaching jobs highly (R8; R10). Respondents' passion for students was a factor in their decision to remain teachers at Islamic elementary schools (R7). In addition, several respondents reported feeling competent to teach in private Islamic elementary schools and address student learning issues (R9). The teacher's statements indicated that psychological aspects, such as a sense of happiness, are essential in teaching elementary school students. However, they face numerous obstacles and overwhelming challenges. The teachers also anticipated that their affective feelings for their students would increase their motivation to continue teaching. Affection catalyzes satisfaction and enjoyment in teaching, reducing teachers' boredom and tension. Teachers also reported that their resilience was influenced by their belief that they could overcome all their problems (self-efficacy).

Table 4. Psychological factors influencing teacher resilience.

Psychological Factors	Examples of respondents' statements
Teaching is an enjoyable job	"Although the teacher's work is sometimes tiring and saturating, overall, I feel happy when teaching students". (R8) "In my opinion, teaching is entertainment for me when facing problems. All problems will be forgotten for a moment when teaching madrasa students". (R10)
Feelings of affection for students	"I feel a sense of closeness to the kids; that makes me enjoy teaching and choose to be a teacher despite not making much money". (R7)
Teachers' self-efficacy in solving all problems	"Teaching in private elementary schools must be patient because facing children growing up as teenagers is often problematic. However, if I, as a teacher, can handle it well and wisely, the children will be close to me, which motivates me to come to the school to teach and meet them." (R9)

Teacher resilience is evident in teachers' professional performance, as observed among the respondents in this study, such as R3 and R8. Teachers' high resilience indicators include responsible behavior, strong commitment, fatigue resistance, cheerful and happy expressions despite challenging conditions, and overcoming obstacles while teaching. According to the principal's observation, respondent R3 exhibited exceptional motivation and diligence. Consistently, R3 arrived punctually at school (6:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.) and greeted his first-grade students who entered the classroom. As a homeroom teacher, R3 taught nearly all subjects carefully, maintaining a joyful and smiling demeanor that created a friendly learning environment. Although she occasionally implemented punishment to address problematic student conduct, she administered it respectfully and compassionately. The principal and colleagues at the private Islamic elementary school observed R3's simple behavior.

"Mr. Teacher (R3) is a dedicated and enthusiastic teacher. She is patient and attentive, so the children are very close and often request her presence even when ill or absent. Unfortunately, our school has been unable to offer teachers sufficient financial compensation."

One of R3's colleagues seemed to share this opinion,

"In our school, Mrs. R3 is painstaking, patient, and diligent in teaching. She is also humorous, so many students love her."

Another resilience teacher is R8. In addition to R8 as a teacher, he worked as a motorcycle taxi driver to supplement his insufficient household income. Despite facing financial challenges, he maintains a solid commitment to his profession. As the sixth-grade homeroom teacher, he prioritizes his students' academic achievement to perform excellently in school and national exams. Daily, R8 motivated his students to arrive early at school to engage in Qur'an reading and discussion related to previous national tests. Although he displays a firm approach during instruction, he is attentive and patient. Additionally, R8 occasionally uses his funds to purchase learning materials for his students. His students consider him strict, patient, considerate, and attentive.

"The teacher (R8) is very kind and patient. If we are tired of learning, he often makes fun games. Sometimes, we are given sweets or cakes when studying, so we are happy to learn."

Another student had the same opinion,

"Mr. R8 is enthusiastic about teaching us to excel in the exam. When I was sick, he visited me and gave me a photocopy of the exam questions for home study. He teaches the lesson patiently, but I am also afraid that the teacher (R8) is angry because the students are naughty."

All respondents exhibited high resilience levels in educating students, as indicated by positive emotions and teaching behaviors. Positive emotions are expressed in the teacher's enjoyment, zeal, optimism, patience, and contentment with their work. Likewise, their resilience was reflected in their teaching behaviors of being patient, caring, cheerful, energetic, responsible, problem-solving-oriented, and devoted behaviors. The findings are summarized in Figure 1.

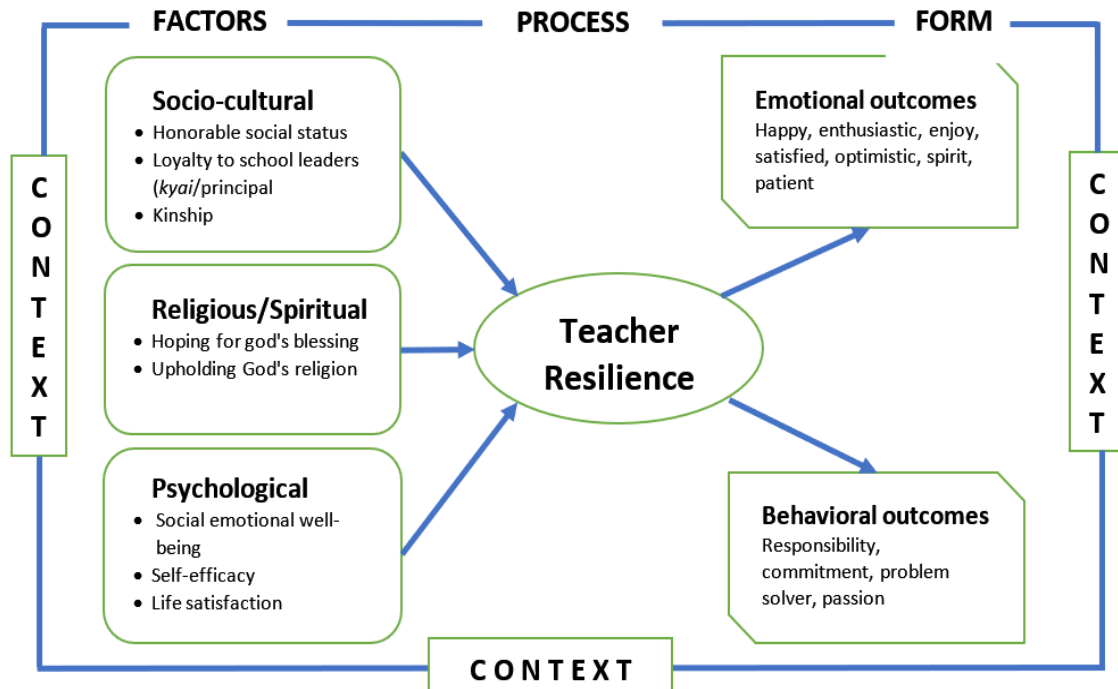


Figure 1. Factors and the Form of Teacher Resilience

This study identifies three primary factors affecting teacher's resilience in remote areas: sociocultural, religious, and psychological. Sociocultural factors encompass social standing, loyalty to their alma mater as former students, and respect for school authorities. Religious beliefs emphasize the importance of teaching as worship, the desire to be a servant adored by God, and education as sustenance. Teachers also experience favorable psychological states when teaching, such as happiness, self-efficacy, and compassion for students, which substantially impact their emotional and professional resilience when facing challenges and difficulties.

Teacher resilience is a psychological state under stressful conditions. Exposure to challenging contexts sharpens the teacher's capacity to adjust to varied settings and effectively cope with difficult circumstances. Numerous external elements, such as social circumstances and internal factors, such as religious beliefs and psychology, significantly impact the teacher's abilities. Lu et al. (2024), Morettini et al. (2019), and Gu (2018) state that resilience could evolve and manifest due to dynamic processes in specific environments. Religious belief, social status, and psychological condition substantially impact private Islamic elementary school teacher's resilience. The teachers' resilience is bolstered by the community's cognition of the teachers' roles, thereby elevating their social standing. Current research and previous studies have found that sociocultural influences can impact a teacher's professional life (Beltman, 2021; Gu, 2018; Daniilidou & Platsidou, 2018). The granting of high status by the community is an indication of the community's confidence in teachers. The district must instill in them a sense of acceptance, belonging, and prosperity to support their professions as teachers (Diab, 2024; Johnson et al., 2014). Moreover, the granting of moral status by society to teachers is evidence of a peaceful connection between teachers and the community, as well as a social incentive for teachers to work in their field consistently (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Kassis et al., 2019; Wei et al., 2011). Rutter (2012) argues that the community's values, norms, and expectations toward teachers could benefit teacher resilience, as the current study shows that the community's high regard for teachers is inextricable from those values.

Charismatic religious or school leaders in society significantly impact teacher resilience in remote areas. In Indonesian culture, reverence for *kyai* and other spiritual leaders is highly regarded. The close relationship between the respondent and the leader (*kyai*) who led the Islamic school where the respondents worked fostered a sense of loyalty and moral obligation to aid *Kyai's efforts* in education by becoming a teacher. Previous

studies emphasize the influence of teacher-school solid leader relationships on personal well-being and professional success, essential for developing teachers' resilience (Peters & Pearce, 2012; Rostini et al., 2022; Saefudin et al., 2022). Second, respondents stated that teaching is a noble, God-honored, worship-worthy profession, and the reward will continue to flow until the teacher dies, which is a compelling factor in building the teacher's resilience. Although their remuneration as teachers at Islamic elementary schools was not proportionate to their obligations, this idea made respondents more accepting and less concerned about their financial situation. This study's findings support earlier research indicating that believing in religious principles can affect an individual's resilience (Lu & Hua, 2022). Spirituality and religious views are also related to an individual's ability to deal with severe liver problems, improve their quality of life, and overcome life's stressors and boredom at work (Agvent, 2020; Phillips, 2021).

The third factor influencing resilience is favorable psychological conditions. Their resilience is enhanced when these private Islamic elementary school teachers experience social and psychological well-being, happiness, and life fulfillment. In addition, teacher self-efficacy in overcoming problems in teaching their students is crucial to their survival as educators in complex remote area contexts (Nikolau et al., 2021). The extent to which teachers adjust positively to their roles as educators influences their motivation and capacity to carry out teaching obligations (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). Researchers have demonstrated that psychological well-being is an essential mental condition for teachers to remain in their careers in the face of friction and challenges (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). Similarly, teachers' utter boredom harms their teaching quality (Flook et al., 2013). Following previous studies findings, psychological factors significantly influence teachers' resilience (Hascher et al., 2021; Macrae & Wiig, 2019; Richards et al., 2016).

This study shows teacher resiliency both emotionally and in teaching performance. Emotionally, teachers exhibit positivity, patience, student connectedness, spirit, and teaching fulfillment. The teachers also demonstrated responsible behaviors, high teaching commitment, problem-solving skills, respect for student's well-being, and building harmonious relationships with students and other school residents. These teachers' sensitive mental health and effective professional performance were attributed to teacher resilience. Scholars have suggested that highly resilient teachers exhibit a sense of well-being and job satisfaction (Bachler et al., 2023; Flores, 2018; Macrae & Wiig, 2019), as well as excitement and enjoyment of teaching and self-efficacy (Flores, 2018). Teachers with high levels of resilience showed good work performance, such as commitment (Gu & Day, 2013), the ability to be problem solvers (Judilla & Rellon, 2022), and collaboration (Mansfield et al., 2016). Boredom and pressure are indicators of low resilience, yet their presence shows good stability (Mansfield & Beltman, 2019). This study proves that private Islamic elementary school teachers' resilience in remote Indonesian areas may be cultivated in particular circumstances. Therefore, encouraging the creation of three action plans by the community, the government, and the schools is needed. The first is establishing an environment conducive to teacher performance and professionalism. Second, conditions should be improved so Islamic elementary school teachers can live honorably in remote areas. Third, both action plans can serve as a starting point for obtaining the government. Moreover, the community's commitment to implementing education and supporting teachers, particularly in remote areas, so they can continue to teach professionally.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teachers in private Islamic primary schools in remote areas of Indonesia face significant challenges. However, they continue to demonstrate high resilience in carrying out their duties. Three main factors contribute to this resilience: sociocultural, spiritual/religious, and psychological. These findings suggest that resilience is not innate but rather a capability developed through environmental interactions. This understanding provides a foundation for developing strategies to strengthen teachers' resilience in challenging environments. However, this study was limited to educators in Islamic primary schools in remote areas of Indonesia. This limitation indicates the need for further research covering various educational levels and contexts across Indonesia. Expanding the scope of research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how sociocultural, spiritual, and psychological factors influence teacher resilience across diverse educational settings.

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