

## **Navigating Curriculum Integration in Minority Contexts: Challenges and Cultural Dynamics of Integrated Islamic Education in Pattani, Thailand**

**<sup>1</sup>Moh Dheva Syahroni Attijani, <sup>2</sup>Siti Mutholingah, <sup>3</sup>Rosidin, <sup>4</sup>Sella Eyra**

<sup>1,2,3</sup> STAI Ma'had Aly Al-Hikam Malang, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup> Santi Witya Serong School, Thailand

[<sup>1</sup>dhevaysahroni023@gmail.com](mailto:1dhevaysahroni023@gmail.com), [<sup>2</sup>siti.mutholingah89@gmail.com](mailto:2siti.mutholingah89@gmail.com),

[<sup>3</sup>mohammed.rosidin@gmail.com](mailto:3mohammed.rosidin@gmail.com), [<sup>4</sup>sella.eyra@hotmail.com](mailto:4sella.eyra@hotmail.com)

**Abstract.** This study aims to analyze the practice of integrative Islamic education at Santi Witya Serong Pattani Thailad School in balancing religious and national curricula, identifying challenges in its implementation and the role of Malay-Islamic culture in strengthening it. This study uses a descriptive qualitative design, with data collection through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis uses thematic analysis techniques to identify key themes related to the integrated Islamic education curriculum, challenges in its implementation, and the influence of Malay-Islamic culture. The results reveal that (1) integrated Islamic education at Santi Witya has been implemented by combining religious and national curricula, but it is not balanced due to the dominance of the national curriculum; (2) the main challenges lie in the limited number of human resources who are proficient in both religious and general subjects, as well as structural constraints such as the non-recognition of religious subjects in the national evaluation system; (3) Malay-Islamic culture plays a significant role in strengthening integrative education through daily rituals, the use of the Malay language, and non-formal mosque-based schools. This study has relevant contributions to models of integrative Islamic education, Muslim minority education, or culture-based critical pedagogy. Thus, integrative Islamic education based on strengthening the distinctive Malay-Islamic culture of Pattani is a novelty in this study.

**Keywords.** Curriculum Integration; Educational Challenges; Integrative Islamic Education; Malay-Islamic Culture; Pattani-Thailand.

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis praktik pendidikan Islam integratif di Sekolah Santi Witya Serong Pattani Thailad dalam menyeimbangkan kurikulum agama dan nasional, mengidentifikasi tantangan dalam implementasinya dan peran budaya Melayu-Islam dalam memperkuatnya. Studi ini menggunakan desain kualitatif deskriptif, dengan pengumpulan data melalui observasi partisipan, wawancara mendalam dan dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan teknik analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi tema-tema kunci yang berkaitan dengan kurikulum pendidikan Islam integratif, tantangan dalam implementasi dan pengaruh budaya Melayu-Islam. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa (1) pendidikan Islam integratif di Santi Witya telah diimplementasikan dengan menggabungkan kurikulum agama dan nasional, namun tidak seimbang karena dominasi kurikulum nasional; (2) tantangan utama terletak pada keterbatasan sumber daya manusia yang menguasai bidang ilmu agama dan umum sekaligus, serta kendala struktural seperti tidak diakuinya mata pelajaran agama dalam sistem evaluasi nasional; (3) budaya Melayu-Islam memainkan peran signifikan dalam memperkuat pendidikan integratif melalui ritual harian, penggunaan bahasa Melayu, dan sekolah non-formal berbasis masjid. Penelitian ini memiliki kontribusi yang relevan untuk model pendidikan Islam integratif,

pendidikan minoritas Muslim, atau pedagogi kritis berbasis budaya. Dengan demikian, pendidikan Islam integratif yang didasarkan pada penguatan budaya Melayu-Islam khas Pattani merupakan kebaruan dalam penelitian ini.

**Kata Kunci.** Integrasi Kurikulum; Tantangan Pendidikan; Pendidikan Islam Integratif; Budaya Melayu-Islam; Pattani-Thailand

## A. INTRODUCTION

Southern Thailand, particularly Pattani, is home to a Malay Muslim population that historically has a strong religious and cultural identity, yet lives in a country with a Buddhist majority. As a result, education has become a strategic field for maintaining identity and meeting the demands of national development. Integrative Islamic education has emerged as a crucial model, seeking to integrate the religious curriculum with the secular curriculum standardized by the Thai government. This integrative educational effort aims to ensure that graduates have national and global competencies, while maintaining the spiritual, moral, and linguistic integrity embedded in Pattani's distinctive Malay-Islamic tradition.

Philosophically, integrative education is ideal, but its implementation in the field faces significant tensions and complexities. The core problem identified is curriculum imbalance, namely that the national curriculum tends to dominate the religious curriculum. This is indicated by government policies and public perceptions of religious education, which are relatively low.

The Thai national curriculum focuses on secular (general) subjects, placing Islamic studies as an additional subject without formal academic value, thereby weakening its status in the eyes of students and parents (Syakhrani, 2022). In addition, based on the results of preliminary observations conducted by researchers at Santi Wittya Pattani School in Thailand, there is still a limited quantity and quality of teachers who are competent in both religious and secular subjects and are able to teach with an integrated vision (Kaharuddin et al., 2025).

Based on these facts, intensive and continuous teacher training should be an urgent necessity. However, in reality, there is still a lack of support and commitment from institutions to implement it. This problem is exacerbated by variations in student learning interests and an overloaded curriculum, which become further obstacles to the implementation of this integrative education.

Various previous studies have actually explored issues surrounding the gap in Islamic education among Muslim minorities in Southern Thailand. A study conducted by (Lubis et al., 2024) has verified the existence of curriculum and policy conflicts between the central government and local Islamic educational institutions. Research by (Khalda et al., 2024) focused on the role of the Malay language as a marker of identity and a medium of instruction that is under threat. Research by (Anshori, 2023) explains that resistance from some Muslim communities stems from their belief that the Thai government's efforts to integrate the religious curriculum with the national curriculum could erode their Islamic identity and values. Research by (Mawardi, 2022) in Pattani on issues of social support, the legality of religious subjects in the national system, and the influence of local and national cultures is very important for integrative education to be accepted and implemented sustainably. Research by (Ardae & Wan, 2020) emphasizes the practical challenges faced in implementing integration, namely the lack of quantity and quality of human resources, social resistance, and structural inequalities in Thailand's national education system.

Previous research reviews have revealed many structural challenges and the dominance of the national curriculum. However, previous research has been minimal in

analyzing cultural dynamics as a solution and balancing force in integration. To be precise, there has been no comprehensive exploration of how Malay-Islamic culture, through local traditions, particularly the Malay language, and non-formal mosque-based institutions, acts as an active agent that strengthens and supports the sustainability of integrative Islamic education in Pattani, making it resilient to the pressures of the national curriculum. Therefore, this article attempts to fill this research gap by viewing culture not only as a context but as a key variable in the success of integration. Thus, this study is novel in its application of a multidimensional approach (structural, cultural, political), analysis of Muslim minority identity in education, and focus on the interaction of human resources and Islamic education policy in Thailand, particularly in the Pattani region.

Based on this research gap, this article aims to analyze the practice of integrative Islamic education in Pattani in an effort to navigate and balance the religious and national curricula, identify specific challenges faced in the implementation of integrative Islamic education, and explore in depth the dynamic role of Malay-Islamic culture in strengthening and supporting integrative education.

## **B. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design (Nasution, 2023). This approach was chosen because it provides an opportunity for in-depth exploration of complex and contextual phenomena, namely the navigation of curriculum integration and the cultural dynamics of integrated Islamic education in the context of minorities at Santi Wittya Serong School, Pattani, Thailand. Santi Wittya Serong School was chosen as the research location because of its profile as a unique example of an Islamic school in Pattani that implements an integrative curriculum, namely the Thai national curriculum with the Islamic Religious curriculum in the context of the Thai Muslim minority.

The data collection technique in this study was participatory observation. The researcher's role was that of a participant observer (Yusuf, 2017). That is, the researcher not only observed but also participated in the activities being observed. The objects of observation were Islamic religious education activities in the classroom and Islamic religious education using the Malay language, which took place in the classroom and in the school mosque.

The data was reinforced through semi-structured in-depth interviews (Alijoyo et al., 2021). The informants were the principal of Santi Wittya Serong School, Islamic religion teachers, and students. These informants were selected purposively because they were the key informants who best understood the focus of the research. The principal was the highest policy maker in the implementation of the integrative curriculum, while the Islamic religion teachers and students were the implementers of the integrative curriculum.

To supplement this, the researcher collected data through documentation techniques in the form of reviewing the necessary documents (Fadli, 2021). These included the Islamic religion curriculum documents and Islamic religion learning resources that used Malay text (Arabic Malay in Thai), which is identical to Jawa-Pegon in Indonesia.

The data obtained was then analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques according to (Creswell, 2019). Data analysis began with the data organization and in-depth description phase. All qualitative data, including observation notes, transcripts of interviews with the principal, teachers, and students, as well as curriculum documents and notes, were organized into a rich single case database. The next stage was thick description. This description had to capture in detail the unique background of Santi Wittya Serong School, the context of minority education in Pattani, the history of curriculum integration in the school, and the role of Pattani Malay in the Islamic education process. This description became the foundation for understanding the challenges of curriculum integration and

cultural dynamics manifested in one specific institution.

Next, the analysis process will continue with the development of themes that focus on the uniqueness of the Santi Wittya Serong School case. Because this is a single case, the researcher looks for patterns of integration within the school, comparing the experiences and perceptions of various informants within the school. The technique used is data classification, in which all data segments are grouped into key themes, namely the practice of integrative Islamic education in Pattani in an effort to navigate and balance the religious and national curricula, the specific challenges faced in the implementation of integrative Islamic education, and an in-depth exploration of the dynamic role of Malay-Islamic culture in strengthening and supporting integrative education.

The final stage in this data analysis is interpretation and conclusion drawing, which focuses on naturalistic generalization. This aims to explain to readers how the case of Santi Wittya Serong School provides a deep and unique understanding of curriculum integration navigation in a minority context, while linking it to broader theories of education and identity.

To check the validity of the data in this study, the researcher used source triangulation and technique triangulation (Sugiyono, 2018). The researcher conducted source triangulation by checking the interview results of all informants, namely the principal, Islamic teachers, and students at Santi Wittya Serong School. When the results obtained from the three informants were the same, the data was declared valid. The researcher then conducted source triangulation, which involved checking the interview data from the informants to see if it was consistent with the observation data and existing documents. If the interview data was consistent with the observation data and documentation, the data was declared valid.

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Implementation of Integrative Islamic Education in Pattani

In general, Islamic schools in Pattani implement an integrative curriculum by combining religious and general subjects, although in practice, the portion of religious subjects is smaller.

This is also the case with Santi Wittya Serong School. Administratively, Santi Wittya uses an integrated curriculum that combines religious and general subjects. On the one hand, Santi Wittya uses the national curriculum mandated by the government. On the other hand, Santi Wittya uses a religious curriculum that it has designed independently. Santi Wittya incorporates Islamic values into daily activities, such as reading the Qur'an and praying in congregation. Functionally, this integrated curriculum is a model of functional dualism, because although this integration model works well, in reality there is still an imbalance. General subjects are very dominant, while religious subjects receive less recognition from institutions and the general public.

This imbalance was confirmed by Mr. Maruding Lebaesa, Principal of Santi Wittya: "The curriculum from the Kingdom consists of physical education, social studies, mathematics, foreign languages, science, and technology. There are no religious studies. Religious studies are additional lessons from us (Santi Wittya)."

The Thai national curriculum is more dominant due to policy imperatives from the Thai Ministry of Education. Santi Wittya, as an institution formally recognized by the state (despite its Islamic foundation background), must comply with national standards and examinations. Structural sanctions are imposed if schools fail to meet these standards, including the risk of losing funding, accreditation, and hindering students' opportunities to continue their higher education at state universities. Therefore, principals and

administrators are required to allocate significant class hours, resources, and pedagogical focus to national core subjects (such as Thai Language, Mathematics, and Science) to ensure students are competent in national standardized tests. Compliance with this policy framework inherently places the national curriculum as a non-negotiable priority in the school's formal schedule and assessment.

This finding is reinforced by research (Syaiful et al., 2022) that found Islamic schools implementing the Thai national curriculum, such as Mathematics, Thai language, and Science alongside a religious curriculum that includes Arabic, Fiqh, and the Qur'an. The implementation of the Thai national curriculum and the Islamic religious curriculum in these Islamic schools is in line with the theory of Islamic education integration, which emphasizes the importance of unifying religious and general knowledge in a complete and holistic education system (Daulay & Salminawati, 2022). This concept has been developed by many contemporary Islamic thinkers such as Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Iqbal Suhaeb, who reject the dichotomy between religious knowledge and worldly knowledge (Nafisah et al., 2023). According to al-Attas, Islamic education should be directed towards forming insan adabi (civilized human beings) through the integration of religious and general knowledge (Fauzi, 2025).

Structurally, this dominance is reinforced through control of resources and provision of materials. The central government provides teaching materials, textbooks, and teacher training, most of which focus on the national curriculum. While Santi Wittya strives to integrate Islamic content, the school must develop (or obtain from local sources) all materials relevant to their Malay-Islamic religious and cultural curriculum.

Mrs. Rohma, a religious studies teacher at Santi Wittya, said:

"We try to strike a balance, but the national curriculum remains more dominant."

Classroom observations show that Thai language lessons are integrated with Islamic religious education. The Thai national curriculum requires the teaching of Thai language and literature. At Santi Wittya, teachers not only teach reading and writing skills in Thai, but also use texts and narratives rooted in local Islamic values and culture to supplement the standard material. For example, in Islamic studies lessons on morals or fiqh, teachers ask students to work in Malay-Thai. This is Thai written using the Malay Arabic script or Yawi (Pegon) script.

This imbalance greatly affects how minority students in Pattani navigate and shape their identities. This imbalance can be mapped into three categories:

First, a tense bicultural identity. Students are forced to internalize two cultural identities, namely to be obedient Thai citizens (proficient in Thai language and national history) and at the same time to maintain their Malay-Islamic identity. The dominant curriculum emphasizes a central Thai identity framework, which can potentially cause disconnection or feelings of alienation from their own historical and cultural narratives.

Second, ambiguous identity negotiation. An unbalanced curriculum forces students to constantly negotiate which identity to prioritize in a given context. In the classroom, they must appear as high-achieving Thai students, while at home or in their communities, they must function as devout Malay Muslims. This can lead to identity confusion or feelings that one aspect of their identity is not fully recognized.

Third, Strengthening cultural resistance. Excessive domination of the national curriculum can trigger stronger backlash or cultural resistance, both individually and collectively.

Students and communities may consciously hold on more strongly to local values and language (Yawi) in an effort to protect the authenticity of their identity from the threat of assimilation. Santi Wittya serves as a stronghold where this Malay-Islamic identity is

reinforced, despite curricular pressures from outside.

The practice of integrative Islamic education in Pattani, particularly in the Kampong Serong area and at the Santi Wittya Serong School, reflects a genuine effort to integrate the Thai national curriculum with Islamic religious education. Observations show that the Malay community, with its strong Islamic traditions, is very supportive of integrative education practices. Local traditions such as the celebration of Maulid Nabi, the use of Malay in everyday language, and informal school programs at the mosque every weekend—called “Sekolah Melayu” (Malay School)—form an educational ecosystem that integrates Islam and culture.

Another example that reflects the implementation of integrative education can be seen in the following observation results table:

Table C.1. Practices of Integrative Islamic Education in Pattani, Thailand

No	Observation Object	Observation Findings	Observation Implications
1	Malay-Islamic Local Culture	Traditions such as Maulid Nabi, Tahlilan, and syukuran are still preserved by the Pattani community	Local culture strengthens Islamic identity and supports character education based on local values
2	Language in Learning and Daily Life	Malay is used in daily life and Thai is used in schools. Some subjects are taught using Arabic-Malay script (Yawi)	The use of two languages demonstrates adaptation to the national curriculum as well as preservation of local identity
3	Curriculum Structure in Schools	Two curricula run concurrently: the national (Thai) curriculum and the religious (Islamic) curriculum	A concrete example of the integration of general and religious curricula. It requires time management and human resources skills to implement both harmoniously
4	Daily Activities at School	Morning assembly: memorization of vocabulary in various languages, reading of Hadith, Dhuha prayer, and recitation of the Qur'an before classes begin	Integrating religious values into the formal education routine demonstrates an integrative Islamic education practice
5	Non-Formal Learning (Malay School)	School in the mosque on Saturdays and Sundays that teaches the Qur'an, Malay Arabic writing, literature, and local culture	Strengthening Islamic values and Malay culture outside the formal system broadens the scope of integrative education
6	Islamic Boarding Schools (Pondok Pesantren)	Teach classical Islamic texts, memorization of the Qur'an, and local customs. Caregivers are referred to as “babo.” The application of the classical system is still dominant.	Traditional Islamic education continues to exist and play a role in preserving local values and shaping Islamic personalities.
7	Teacher Teaching Methods	Contextualization of learning to strengthen student absorption and instill moral values and local	Contextualization of learning that strengthens student absorption and instills moral

No	Observation Object	Observation Findings	Observation Implications
		Malay culture, such as the insertion of folk tales and local proverbs in the delivery of lesson material	values and culture
8	Community Religious Social Activities	Religious activities such as communal zikir, Sufism studies, multilingual sermons, and religious holiday celebrations are conducted intensively.	These activities create a social environment that supports the internalization of religious values and strengthens social cohesion.
9	Attitudes towards Religion and Tolerance	The community is very religious and open to differences. Adult women wear headscarves, men actively participate in congregational prayers, and the community follows Sufi orders	High religiosity supports the success of integrative education while demonstrating an inclusive and tolerant model of Islam
10	Structural Challenges from the Government	Religious studies are not formally recognized in national exams. Teachers are limited to teaching two curricula at once.	Policy innovation and teacher capacity building are needed so that Islamic education can keep up with national academic standards.

Source: Research Data Compilation

Table C.1 shows that Santi Wittya creatively incorporates activities such as multilingual vocabulary memorization, Hadith recitation, and Dhuha prayers before class begins as a form of integrating religious and cultural values into academic activities (Yana & Susanti, 2024). This shows that integrative education does not only occur structurally in the lesson schedule, but also culturally and symbolically in students' daily activities in the classroom, such as wearing Islamic clothing and the habit of reciting prayers before studying. The implication is that even though the national curriculum is prioritized administratively, cultural strength and community awareness keep religious education alive and relevant.

In the context of classroom learning, Santi Wittya students wear uniforms that reflect their Islamic identity, such as the kopyah for male students and the jilbab for female students. This is a concrete manifestation of the implementation of integrative education that combines the national curriculum with the religious and cultural values of the Pattani Muslim community.

Figure C.1: Classroom Learning Process



Source: Field observation

## 2. Challenges in Implementing Integrative Islamic Education

A significant challenge in implementing the integrative curriculum at Santi Wittya is that Islamic religious studies are not recognized as part of the National Examination or the state standard evaluation that determines graduation and access to university. Although the school considers religious subjects to be very important for the formation of students' identity and morals, the absence of these subjects in the formal state assessment system structurally lowers their status in the eyes of students, parents, and even teachers. This creates internal pressure for schools to divert significant pedagogical time and focus from religious subjects to nationally tested subjects in order to guarantee students' academic future and socioeconomic mobility. In other words, the national exam policy indirectly enforces curricular priorities that lead to the dominance of a secular curriculum, regardless of the school's integrative philosophy.

This structural challenge is in line with the findings (Muslih & Kholis, 2021) that Thailand's national education system administratively prioritizes the general curriculum and does not give official recognition to Islamic religious studies. This policy creates an imbalance in integrative Islamic education, which aims to proportionally integrate Islamic values and national academic achievement (Zainuddin et al., 2023).

Given that Islamic religious studies at Santi Wittya are positioned as "additional lessons," the curriculum is developed entirely by the school. On the other hand, considering that religious studies grades cannot be used to seek employment in state institutions in Thailand, parents encourage their children to focus on general subjects, as these are considered more important for their future success.

In the context of classroom learning, the low status of religious studies in the eyes of students greatly affects the learning atmosphere. This was confirmed by Mrs. Rohma, a religious studies teacher at Santi Wittya:

"The problem now is that the children are not paying attention. They lack interest and concentration in their studies, especially in religious studies. Maybe it's also because we don't have a certificate. So, they only study for daily practice. The reason is that this school only issues general certificates, not religious certificates."

Ultimately, the national curriculum serves as a common language that ensures Pattani graduates can compete and integrate into the broader Thai context, creating socio-economic pressure for schools to dominate the national curriculum in order to guarantee the future of their students.

Based on the reality of education in Thailand as described above, private Islamic schools also lack teaching and educational personnel who are competent in two fields of knowledge, namely general knowledge and religion. Due to these limitations, there is a skills gap, whereby teachers only master one field of knowledge. As a result, teachers find it difficult to deliver an integrative learning process, which ideally requires cross-disciplinary understanding (Ardae & Wan, 2020). Integrative education is the integration of religious and general knowledge into a single, unified system (Baidarus & Fitri, 2021). Unfortunately, the integration of general knowledge with religious values has not been fully realized in the field due to limitations in human resources and educational system support (Hasanah et al., 2024).

In practice, integrative education requires not only a dual curriculum but also teachers with dual capacities. However, based on findings in Santi Wittya and Kampong Serong, it appears that integrative education still faces epistemological fragmentation, namely the separation of perspectives on religious and general knowledge (Sari et al.,

2025). This is what Al-Attas refers to as educational dualism. That is, the colonial and secular education systems often place religious knowledge in a marginal position compared to worldly knowledge (Puspitasari, 2022). In the context of Santi Wittya, this dualism is clearly evident in the national curriculum, which is considered the “main course,” while the religious curriculum is placed as a “side dish.”

The challenges in implementing integrative education at Santi Wittya inherently create a dialectical tension between preserving the Malay-Islamic cultural identity and fulfilling state requirements. This tension arises because the Thai national curriculum (reinforced by national examinations and central policies) fundamentally focuses on a centralist narrative, the Thai language, and a national identity that tends to be unitary (singular), which has the potential to ignore the unique culture and history of Pattani. On the other hand, the Malay-Islamic identity is communal, Yawi-speaking, and rooted in traditional Islamic values that demand educational autonomy. The school's efforts to integrate the two have resulted in conflicts over resource and time allocation, forcing Santi Wittya to constantly negotiate between compliance with the state (for the sake of operational continuity and student mobility) and the authenticity of local identity (for the sake of community support and cultural relevance), making student identity and curriculum a constantly negotiated battleground.

Despite major challenges, such as the limited number of teachers proficient in both general and religious studies, as well as weak structural support for religious education, Santi Wittya remains committed to maintaining this integrative system. As a concrete step, Santi Wittya incorporates religious values into academic activities.

To increase the effectiveness of this commitment, Santi Wittya is advised to adopt internal adaptation and external negotiation strategies to strengthen students' analytical insights. Internally, the school implements gradual integration (soft integration) through pedagogical adjustments and contextualization of materials. For example, teachers use examples taken from Islamic law (*Fiqih Muamalah*) or local Malay-Islamic history to teach national history, thereby instilling cultural relevance that enriches students' understanding. In addition, the school extends learning time or incorporates the religious curriculum into co-curricular and extracurricular activities (such as the *tahfizh* program) by maximizing the function of the school mosque to cover religious material not covered by formal class hours.

Externally, schools are advised to utilize the institutional autonomy enjoyed by private Islamic schools in Southern Thailand to maintain Malay (Yawi) as the language of instruction in certain religious classes, while forging close ties with the community to ensure continued cultural support. These adaptations demonstrate that schools are actively seeking a balance between state demands and the preservation of local identity.

This suggestion is in line with research (Tyaningsih & Yurna, 2024) which states that the challenge of implementing integrative Islamic education in Pattani lies in the gap between the idealization of the concept and the practical reality in the field, which must be overcome through affirmative policies, teacher capacity building, and the strengthening of local Islamic educational institutions. Thus, the implementation of integrative Islamic education is not merely an academic strategy, but also a manifestation of the struggle for identity and cultural preservation. Integrative education demonstrates a collective awareness and spirit of sustainability towards education based on strong Islamic and Malay cultural values.

The strategy applied by Santi Wittya to incorporate religious and cultural values is in line with Talcott Parsons' structural-functional theory, which functions the education system to transmit dominant cultural values and maintain social stability (Zahroh et al., 2025). In this context, Santi Wittya has succeeded in harmoniously transmitting both

dominant cultural values (the Thai national curriculum) and local cultural values (the Islamic religious curriculum) without causing social conflicts that undermine the foundations of social stability in Thailand.

### **3. The Role of Malay-Islamic Culture in Strengthening Integrative Islamic Education**

The tension between national curriculum requirements and the preservation of local identity at Santi Wittya cannot be understood without acknowledging the historical minority experience of the Malay-Islamic community of Pattani. Pattani's cultural identity is characterized by a strong sense of socio-religious autonomy and a collective memory of a history that differs from the central Thai narrative. The Yawi language (Pattani Malay) and the boarding school or pesantren institution in Santi Wittya are not only cultural elements, but symbols of passive resistance to the state's attempts to dominate the curriculum. Therefore, when the dominant national curriculum promotes the Thai language and central history, it is inherently seen by the community as a threat to the authenticity of their identity. Santi Wittya functions as a refuge, where the integration of the local curriculum becomes a sociocultural strategy for maintaining identity boundaries. Every pedagogical adjustment to include Islamic values or the Yawi language in the classroom is an act of identity affirmation and negotiation against state hegemony, making it not just an educational issue, but one of cultural sovereignty in the context of a vulnerable minority.

A concrete example of the role of Malay-Islamic culture at Santi Wittya is the implementation of the following mandatory daily rituals:

*First, Congregational Dhuha Prayer.* All students, from grades 1 to 6, are required to perform congregational *Dhuha* prayer every day after the morning assembly.

*Second, Wirid and Al-Qur'an Recitation.* Students in grades 4, 5, and 6 continue with congregational *wirid* recitation and reading or memorizing (*tahifzh*) the Al-Qur'an after *Dhuha* prayer.

*Third, Asmaul Husna.* The recitation of *Asmaul Husna* is mandatory for all students in their respective classes before school dismissal time.

In addition, Santi Wittya has a uniform policy that reflects Islamic identity. Male students wear long pants and a cap, while female students wear skirts or long pants and a headscarf.

The above data shows that Islamic pedagogy at Santi Wittya is strongly supported by collective religious rituals institutionalized by the school. Daily rituals such as congregational prayers (including *Dhuha* and *Zuhur* prayers), as well as intensive *daurah* (lesson) programs outside of formal hours, transform theoretical knowledge into practical behavior. These daily rituals serve as non-classical pedagogical tools that teach discipline, social order, and spiritual commitment. This is an action-based learning approach, as students learn morals not only through lectures, but through the internalization of habits. Through the practice of congregational prayer, students are implicitly trained in leadership (through the role of imam), obedience, and the formation of *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood), which is at the core of the Pattani Muslim community.

Then there is also the preservation of Malay culture through the introduction of Yawi script (Malay-Arabic script) as an additional subject. The widespread use of Pattani Malay (Yawi) at Santi Wittya is a fundamental practice that supports Islamic pedagogy. The Yawi script serves as the primary medium of instruction in core religious subjects such as the Qur'an, Hadith, Aqidah, and Fiqh. Pedagogically, this practice is crucial, as complex religious material can be absorbed more deeply by students when taught in their mother tongue. By avoiding double translations or the use of Thai, which is still a second language for many students, Santi Wittya ensures that the conceptual understanding of ancient Islamic texts is more accurate and culturally meaningful. This practice directly strengthens

the relevance of Islamic education, minimizes gaps in understanding, and places religion within a cognitive and cultural framework that is familiar to students.

Ustadz Muhammad Dare, a lecturer at Fatoni University, emphasizes the strategic role of Malay culture as the starting point for religious education:

"The influence is significant because of Malay culture, starting from kindergarten or tadika, which is based on Malay culture, so that children do not stray from religion.... This culture has never changed until now, which is a strength that fosters a sense in the hearts of these children that religion is important because they have learned it from an early age."

Ustadz Dare also emphasized that culture, religion, language, and manners are still topics of discussion in villages and campuses, and parents play a crucial role in raising children to know good manners, how to socialize, and respect their parents, amid the challenges of modernization that demand everything.

At Santi Wittya, Malay-Islamic culture functions as an epistemological and contextual framework that actively shapes and influences the curriculum, not merely as an identity. This culture determines what is considered valid and relevant knowledge to be taught (epistemology), encouraging schools to integrate religious and local subjects as the core of their curriculum, despite pressure from the national curriculum. In practical terms, the curriculum is adapted to pedagogically reflect local cultural practices, such as using the Yawi language as the medium of instruction for in-depth understanding, and using socio-cultural contexts such as the muamalah system as case studies in mathematics. Thus, culture acts as a filter and determinant of curriculum content, ensuring that the learning system implemented not only educates citizens but also preserves the heritage and communal values critical to the survival of Malay-Islamic culture in the Pattani minority region.

Malay-Islamic social customs have created an ethical and supportive learning environment as a pillar of Islamic pedagogy at Santi Wittya. Deep respect for teachers and other authority figures, as seen in the tradition of kissing hands or asking for permission, is not merely a formality, but a practical manifestation of Islamic teachings on manners and learning ethics. The school often emulates the traditional model of a pesantren (boarding school), which encourages *musyawarah* (discussion and consensus) in problem solving. This environment makes the school a moral laboratory, where students learn social responsibility, interpersonal skills, and the application of Islamic teachings in daily interactions, far beyond the written curriculum in the classroom.

The findings of this article are in line with the findings (Fariati et al., 2025) which state that religious activities such as the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday, recitation of the Qur'an, the use of Malay as the main means of communication, and informal schooling every weekend at the mosque – known as "Sekolah Melayu" – are forms of cultural resistance. In other words, Malay-Islamic culture plays a role in strengthening integrative Islamic education through pedagogy that is responsive to culture. That is, it emphasizes the importance of integrating students' cultural identities into the learning process, so that it is more meaningful and effective for students (Christiananda et al., 2024).

The efforts of the Malay-Muslim community to preserve their culture and identity through integrative Islamic education can be understood as a manifestation of the critical pedagogy advocated by Paulo Freire. This is because the situation in Pattani can be seen as a form of symbolic resistance to the dominant education system (Humaeroh et al., 2021). From Freire's perspective, the situation in Pattani can be interpreted as a form of "cultural oppression" through the state education system. Santi Wittya's efforts to implement integration can be seen as a form of cultural resistance to preserve Muslim identity amid

secular hegemony. This means that integration education functions as a tool for liberation, because integrative education is not merely an instrument of social adjustment, but also a means of maintaining identity and resisting cultural oppression carried out through the state curriculum system (Madhakomala et al., 2022). Among the activities that reflect education as a tool for liberation are character education, school culture, or the integration of social values into education through non-academic activities such as sports that support character education, cooperation, discipline, and Islamic values (Rahman & Ma'ruf, 2022).

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Despite integration efforts, this study identifies significant challenges in the implementation of Integrative Islamic Education in Pattani, Thailand. The main challenges stem from inherent curriculum imbalances, where time and resource allocation still tends to be dominated by the national curriculum, creating a double workload for teachers. These challenges are exacerbated by structural challenges such as the lack of holistically integrated teaching materials, especially in Thai Malay, and the fact that teachers are often specialists in only one field. These challenges often trigger passive cultural resistance. This resistance is not direct rejection, but rather a negotiation effort by schools and communities to maintain the local Islamic curriculum and Malay language (Yawi) as a counterbalance to the hegemony of Thailand's central curriculum.

The role of Malay-Islamic culture is a key factor in strengthening this integrative education. The local community functions as gatekeepers, ensuring that education at Santi Wittya Serong is in line with their socio-cultural and religious identity. The connection between these findings is clear: the imbalance of the dominant national curriculum creates structural challenges (lack of integrated resources), which in turn strengthens the collective cultural resistance led by the community at Santi Wittya School. This resistance becomes a defense mechanism for achieving authenticity in educational practice, making Santi Wittya Serong a model of contextually responsive education. Overall, integrative education here is a dynamic process that is constantly negotiated, driven by structural tensions and reinforced by strong cultural support.

This article makes a significant theoretical contribution to the study of minority Islamic education, particularly in enriching insights into non-confrontational cultural resistance. It shows that cultural resistance can be realized through pedagogical habituation and local curriculum autonomy rather than through overt political action. Practically, these findings have important implications for educational policy reform in Thailand's Muslim minority regions. The Thai government is encouraged to consider more flexible reforms, such as targeted resource allocation for the development of integrated materials in regional languages (Malay/Yawi) and greater recognition of local curricula, to reduce the double burden on schools and strengthen the alignment between education and students' cultural identities.

A key limitation of the single case study at Santi Wittya Serong School lies in its non-comparative nature, as there is no comparison of data taken from other provinces, similar religious schools, or regular public schools, thus limiting the generalization of findings to the specific context of Pattani and this institution. Furthermore, it is necessary to acknowledge the existence of researcher positionality bias, whereby the researcher's background, experience, or expectations may influence the interpretation of rich qualitative data. Most importantly, this study only focuses on the implementation practices and perceptual challenges of the integrative curriculum; therefore, the research does not quantitatively assess student learning outcomes, which limits substantive conclusions about how effective this curriculum integration is in improving students' academic or religious performance.

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