

**THE USE OF STIMULI IN RELIGIOUS PSYCHOLOGY: INTERACTION STRATEGIES OF
INDONESIAN DIASPORA TEACHERS WITH STUDENTS AT SANGKHOM ISLAM
WITTAYA SCHOOL THAILAND**

**PENGUNAAN STIMULUS DALAM PSIKOLOGI AGAMA: STRATEGI INTERAKSI
GURU DIASPORA INDONESIA DENGAN SISWA DI SEKOLAH SANGKHOM ISLAM
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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the use of stimuli in religious psychology as an interaction strategy between Indonesian diaspora teachers and students at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School in Thailand. The main focus of this research is to identify and describe how teachers employ cognitive, affective, and behavioral stimuli in the process of religious education. Through interviews with diaspora teachers, it was found that the approach used involves gentleness, affection, and appreciation for students' efforts, which serve as cognitive stimuli in fostering understanding of the material. Additionally, emotional attention, empathy, and compassionate communication become effective stimuli that strengthen the emotional bond between teachers and students, encouraging student engagement and motivation. Behavioral stimuli are demonstrated through the teachers' role models, the habituation of positive attitudes, and reinforcement of good behavior through rewards and positive reinforcement. This study shows that the integration of these three types of stimuli creates a holistic learning environment that supports students' academic, emotional development.

Keywords: Stimuli, Religious psychology, Diaspora teachers, Teacher-student interaction, Thailand.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis penggunaan stimulus dalam psikologi agama sebagai strategi interaksi antara guru diaspora Indonesia dan siswa di Sekolah Sangkhom Islam Wittaya di Thailand. Fokus utama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi dan mendeskripsikan bagaimana para guru menggunakan stimulus kognitif, afektif, dan perilaku dalam proses pendidikan agama. Melalui wawancara dengan guru diaspora, ditemukan bahwa pendekatan yang digunakan melibatkan kelembutan, kasih sayang, dan apresiasi terhadap usaha siswa, yang berfungsi sebagai stimulus kognitif dalam membangun pemahaman terhadap materi. Selain itu, perhatian emosional, empati, dan komunikasi penuh kasih menjadi stimulus efektif yang memperkuat ikatan emosional antara guru dan siswa, sehingga mendorong keterlibatan dan motivasi belajar siswa. Stimulus perilaku ditunjukkan melalui keteladanan guru, pembiasaan sikap positif, serta penguatan perilaku baik melalui pemberian penghargaan dan penguatan positif. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi ketiga jenis stimulus tersebut menciptakan lingkungan pembelajaran yang holistik yang mendukung perkembangan akademik dan emosional siswa.

Kata kunci: Stimulus, Psikologi agama, Guru diaspora, Interaksi guru-siswa, Thailand.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and the increasing movement of labor across borders, the phenomenon of diaspora is no longer confined to economic or political contexts but has expanded into the realms of education and religion. One interesting form of diaspora to study is the involvement of Indonesian teachers in the Islamic education system in countries with Muslim minorities, such as Thailand. In this country, the

Muslim community in the southern regions, especially in the provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, has established Islamic-based educational institutions as a response to the need for identity, faith, and cultural resistance against the dominance of the majority. One of the educational institutions at the center of Islamic educational activities is Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School, a private Islamic school that is open to international collaboration, including inviting teachers from Indonesia to participate in the teaching process (Ismail, 2019).

Specifically, the presence of Indonesian diaspora teachers in Thailand plays a role not only as educators but also as agents of religious value transmission, bringing a new dimension to the learning process for local Muslim students. In practice, these diaspora teachers face significant challenges, including cultural and linguistic differences, as well as differences in educational systems, yet they are still expected to deliver religious education effectively and adaptively. Amid these challenges, one prominent and under-explored approach is interaction strategies based on religious psychology, particularly through a stimulus-response pattern. Through this approach, Indonesian diaspora teachers not only convey religious material cognitively but also create learning environments that elicit students' affective and spiritual responses directly. This is crucial because religious education is not solely based on conceptual mastery but also on the formation of attitudes and the emotional and behavioral internalization of values (Glock & Stark, 1965).

The approach used by Indonesian diaspora teachers tends to combine active learning methods with affective and religious touchpoints. For instance, observations conducted in the teaching practice at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School revealed that students' responses to religious content delivered with a personal and emotional approach were stronger than those following traditional lecture methods. Students showed increased class participation, the ability to express spiritual experiences, and commitment to religious practices. This indicates a close relationship between the stimulus provided by the teacher whether verbal, through attitudes, or religious modelling and the spiritual responses emerging from the students (Hurlock, 1974).

This approach aligns with the religious psychology perspective, which emphasizes the external influences (stimuli) on the religious development of individuals. Classical theories such as stimulus-response from Pavlov and Skinner have been adapted within the context of religious psychology by experts like Hurlock (1974) and Glock & Stark (1965), who assert that religious learning is not only cognitive but also emotional and behavioral. Proper stimuli can evoke profound religious responses, particularly during adolescence when individuals are seeking religious identity. In this context, Indonesian diaspora teachers act as central figures who indirectly serve as religious models influencing students' religious thoughts and attitudes (Pavlov, 1927).

Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School in Thailand has become one of the private Islamic educational institutions that is relatively open to international collaboration and has established partnerships with various Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. The presence of Indonesian diaspora teachers at this school provides a concrete example of how Islamic values can be transmitted in a cross-cultural context. Additionally, Thailand, as a majority non-Muslim country, offers a contrasting backdrop that allows for a deeper exploration of how external religious stimuli (in this case, diaspora teachers) can shape students' spiritual responses in a social context that is not fully supportive (Molenaar & Wulff, 2018).

Although interest in religious education and the role of diaspora teachers in transmitting cultural and religious values in foreign countries is growing, there remains a significant research gap regarding the use of the stimulus-response approach in the context of Indonesian diaspora teachers teaching Islamic education in non-Muslim-majority countries. Few studies focus specifically on the dynamics of religious psychology in the interaction between diaspora teachers and students, particularly in foreign Islamic educational institutions.

A relevant study to this research is titled "Role of entrepreneurship education, passion, and motivation in augmenting Omani students' entrepreneurial intention: A stimulus-organism-response approach" (Anwar et al., 2023). This study focuses on the stimulus-organism-response approach in exploring students' entrepreneurial intentions in Oman, finding that entrepreneurship education triggers entrepreneurial intentions not only directly but also indirectly through passion and motivation. This indirect pathway was found to be the strongest for students with high entrepreneurial resilience and the weakest for those with low resilience. This research is one of the first to adopt the S-O-R framework in exploring the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention.

There has been limited research that specifically combines the stimulus-response framework in religious psychology with the teaching practices of Indonesian diaspora teachers in Muslim minority regions. Generally, studies in religious psychology within educational contexts focus more on the students as individuals or on national educational systems. This research, however, places the teacher's interaction as the primary stimulus in creating students' religious experiences, especially in intercultural and transnational contexts. Therefore, this study aims to contribute theoretically to the field of religious psychology and provide practical implications for developing religious education methods in cross-cultural and diaspora settings (Higgins & Furlong, 2017).

In conclusion, the novelty of this research lies in its focus on combining the stimulus-response approach within the context of religious education in diaspora environments, particularly examining the interactive strategies used by Indonesian teachers in Islamic schools in non-Muslim-majority countries. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how these teachers use specific pedagogical strategies to generate spiritual and behavioral responses from students, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the psychological and pedagogical dynamics of cross-cultural religious education.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type of research. This approach is chosen to provide an in-depth description of the interaction strategies employed by Indonesian diaspora teachers in conveying religious values to students at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School, Thailand, based on the Stimulus-Response theory in religious psychology. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate for exploring the subjective meaning of the interaction experiences between teachers and students, as well as understanding the psychological dynamics that emerge in the context of cross-cultural and religious education (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

The research site is Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School, located in Narathiwat Province, Southern Thailand, an area with a predominantly Malay-Patani Muslim

population. This school serves as a formal Islamic education institution that also employs diaspora teachers from Indonesia. The research subjects consist of Indonesian diaspora teachers and local Muslim students who interact directly in the religious learning process. The selection of subjects was purposive, taking into account the teachers' active involvement in religious activities and teaching, as well as the students' openness in responding to the learning stimuli (Sugiyono, 2018).

Data collection was carried out using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with Indonesian diaspora teachers to explore their strategies in conveying religious values, as well as with students who received this teaching. Observation was used to capture students' direct responses to the stimuli provided by the teachers, both inside and outside the classroom. Documentation was gathered from school archives, records of religious activities, and teaching materials used by the teachers (Creswell, 2016).

Data analysis was carried out in stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The data was analyzed thematically to identify both verbal and non-verbal forms of stimulus used by the teachers, as well as students' affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses. The validity of the data was ensured through triangulation of techniques and sources, as well as peer review to confirm that the interpretations made reflect the empirical reality (Moleong, 2017).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the psychology of religion, the interaction between educators and students holds strategic value as a medium for conveying spiritual, moral, and social values. The stimulus-response approach, rooted in classical behaviorism, provides a theoretical framework for understanding how external influences in the form of stimuli can shape religious responses internalized by individuals. This theory, pioneered by Ivan Pavlov and further developed by B.F. Skinner, posits that human behavior can be shaped through the process of providing stimuli and reinforcing the responses that emerge (Skinner, 1953).

In religious education, the teacher plays a key role as the primary source of stimuli, which can be verbal (advice, teaching), nonverbal (role modeling, attitude), or emotional (empathy, affection). The students' responses to these stimuli are reflected not only in external religious behavior but also in dimensions of affection, spiritual motivation, and the formation of Islamic identity. The psychology of religion emphasizes that religious experience is influenced by social environmental factors, including interpersonal relationships with religious figures or educators (Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009).

Indonesian diaspora teachers working in a Muslim minority environment such as Southern Thailand face both challenges and opportunities in applying this approach. Their position as authoritative figures and representations of Islam Nusantara facilitates the emergence of distinctive da'wah interaction patterns, combining humanistic, inclusive, and communicative values. Thus, the stimulus-response approach in this context becomes not merely a tool for behavioral conditioning but also a psychological and spiritual bridge between teachers and students in the process of internalizing religious teachings.

This study finds that the interactions between the Indonesian diaspora teachers at Sangkhom Islam Wittaya School form an effective and empathetic religious

communication pattern. These teachers adopt a humanistic, spiritual, and contextual approach, tailored to the cultural background and psychological needs of the students, as follows:

1. Cognitive Stimulus

The diaspora teachers use inspiring religious stories and simple communicative approaches. As stated by Oktaviani and Mahendra:

“We always emphasize that when conveying something to students, it should be done gently because children will easily accept something if it is delivered gently. We must approach them gradually, using language they understand” (Oktaviani, 2024).

“The affection I give is not only in the form of soft words but also in listening to the students' grievances, appreciating their efforts, and showing concern for their academic and personal development” (Mahendra, 2024).

The gentle approach used by both teachers relates to the students' academic development and their understanding of the material as well as appreciation for their efforts. In line with this, Hidayanti also expresses an approach by providing stimuli through appreciation for students.

“Every time I start a lesson, I often ask how they are and occasionally give appreciation for the positive things they have done” (Hidayanti, 2024).

This shows that the teacher not only shows attention but also stimulates the students to think about recognition and appreciation for the positive things they do. Several interviews with informants show how the soft, affectionate, and appreciative approach serves as a cognitive stimulus supporting the students' academic development and understanding of the material. This approach not only creates a safe and comfortable emotional atmosphere for students but also strengthens their mental engagement in the learning process.

Oktaviani's statement emphasizes the importance of conveying material gently and using language that students understand. This is highly relevant to Vygotsky's idea of scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development, where a teacher who is able to simplify language and approach based on students' cognitive stages can facilitate information assimilation and their cognitive development. This gentleness also creates a learning climate with minimal pressure, allowing executive brain functions such as attention and information processing to work optimally.

Mahendra then highlights the affective dimension of cognitive stimuli: listening, appreciating, and showing care. When students feel valued and understood, they are more motivated to engage actively in learning. This aligns with social-emotional learning (SEL), which demonstrates that emotional well-being contributes significantly to academic achievement. Appreciation for effort not only encourages the

development of a growth mindset, where students see struggle and persistence as part of learning success (Dweck, 2006).

Meanwhile, Hidayanti's statement shows that recognizing students' daily aspects, such as asking how they are or offering praise for positive things, serves as a cognitive stimulus that strengthens the teacher-student relationship and creates a supportive learning environment. When students feel seen as individuals, not just learning objects, they find it easier to focus and deeply understand the material. Such humane interactions build trust, strengthen intrinsic motivation, and open the way for higher cognitive engagement.

The educational approach based on gentleness, affection, and appreciation for students' efforts, as exemplified in the quotes, is closely related to students' academic development and understanding. It shows that the success of learning is not only determined by how sophisticated the material is conveyed but also by how sincere and empathetic the delivery is. When done consistently, this approach not only deepens material understanding but also forms resilient and meaningful learning character.

2. Affective Stimulus

In the learning process, student success is not solely determined by cognitive ability or academic competence but is also significantly influenced by emotional conditions and interpersonal relationships created in the classroom. Affective stimulus refers to all forms of emotional encouragement or support given to students, either verbally or nonverbally, which can foster a positive and meaningful learning environment. In this context, the teacher's role is crucial, not only as the content provider but also as a figure who provides a sense of security, value, and attention.

A teacher who can establish emotional closeness and show empathy toward students will create a supportive and inclusive learning space. Such an environment is important for fostering students' self-confidence, motivation, and active involvement in learning. When students feel accepted and loved, they are more open to understanding the material and more confident in expressing their ideas, confusion, or feelings. As one teacher expressed:

“We approach students more with affection, not just by delivering religious lessons. We embrace them, become their confidants, because it is important to bring their hearts closer to Islam” (Oktaviani, 2024).

This statement illustrates that affective stimulus is not just about emotions but also serves as a strategic approach to touching students' psychological aspects in the learning process. Through this affective touch, understanding of the material and appreciation for students' efforts can grow more naturally and profoundly.

In the context of holistic learning, affective stimulus becomes an inseparable aspect of educational success. Teachers are not only tasked with transferring knowledge but also play the role of emotional figures who can offer warmth, care, and security for students. Affective stimulus includes various forms of affection, such as attention, empathy, and acceptance of students as whole individuals, including their feelings and issues outside of academics.

This emotional attention directly impacts students' engagement in learning. When students feel seen, heard, and valued, they are more open in communicating

and more confident in expressing opinions or asking about things they do not understand. A teacher who provides affective support creates an environment that fosters positive psychological development and builds strong emotional bonds between teachers and students.

This forms the foundation for a deep learning process, not only in the cognitive aspects but also in the development of students' character and spirituality. As expressed in the following interview, the teacher's attention becomes an emotional strength that drives students' enthusiasm for learning and strengthens their attachment to the safe and supportive school environment:

“Attention is one form of affection that is very easy for students to accept. By giving attention, they feel valued” (Elvionita, 2024).

“Some students often come after class to ask not only about lessons but also about personal problems. I always try to listen and guide them with a religious perspective” (Triadinanti, 2024).

In the field of education, attention and affection are crucial factors influencing students' emotional well-being, which, in turn, can affect their learning processes. Students who feel noticed and valued by their teachers are more likely to feel secure, comfortable, and motivated to actively participate in learning activities. As Elvionita (2024) explains, attention is a form of affection that is easily accepted by students. By offering sincere attention, students feel acknowledged, which can significantly enhance their confidence in engaging in the learning process. This demonstrates that the attention provided by teachers goes beyond merely formal actions in delivering content; it serves as a recognition of the student's existence, playing a vital role in building positive emotional connections between the teacher and the student.

This statement aligns with educational psychology theories that emphasize the importance of a positive emotional relationship between teachers and students. For instance, in Harry Harlow's theory of object relations, the affective bond between a child and a caregiver (in this case, the teacher) is essential for the child's social and emotional development. Children who feel appreciated and noticed tend to develop better social skills and are more courageous in expressing their feelings or concerns. Therefore, the attention provided by teachers serves as the foundation for creating a sense of security that allows students to learn and grow optimally.

Furthermore, the attention provided by teachers directly impacts students' understanding of the lesson material. When students feel that they are cared for not only academically but also personally, they are more likely to feel valued and open to interacting with their teachers. This attention acts as a form of positive affirmation that can boost students' confidence in asking questions or clarifying any confusion regarding the material being studied.

Triadinanti's statement also highlights another deeper aspect of attention, which is the sincerity in listening and providing guidance, both academically and in terms of the students' personal lives. Teachers who are willing to listen to students' personal issues and offer guidance based on religious perspectives or moral values not only demonstrate empathy but also serve as role models who reinforce positive values in students. This is particularly significant in character education, where students are

not only taught knowledge but are also expected to develop as wise, ethical individuals capable of facing life's challenges.

In this regard, the attention given by teachers also fosters a closer and more open relationship between teachers and students. When a teacher listens to students' complaints and offers advice that extends beyond the lesson content to address personal issues, it builds mutual trust and respect, which are critical in the educational context. This process can also enhance students' engagement in learning, as they feel that their teachers care not only about their academic achievements but also about their overall emotional well-being.

The importance of teachers' attention in helping students cope with personal issues is also discussed in various educational psychology theories, such as John Bowlby's attachment theory, which emphasizes the importance of a secure and attentive relationship between children and trusted figures. In the educational context, a teacher's attention to students' emotional needs can create an environment where students feel accepted and understood, which supports their growth both academically and socially.

The attention provided by teachers, whether in the form of recognition of students' presence or through guidance in their personal issues, plays a vital role in students' personal and academic development. Teachers who can balance attention to both aspects contribute significantly to creating a healthy, secure, and productive learning environment.

3. Behavioral Stimulus

Education is not only about instilling knowledge and moral values through words but also through concrete actions demonstrated by educators. In this case, behavioral stimulus refers to all forms of encouragement and influence that the teacher exerts through role modeling, habituation, and reinforcement strategies that directly guide student behavior. The teacher becomes a central figure in shaping students' habits, attitudes, and character through consistent actions and attitudes shown in daily life.

Teachers' behavior that is polite, disciplined, responsible, and caring reflects the values they wish to instill in students. In this context, teachers do not just teach with words but also "teach with behavior." When students observe and experience their teacher's concrete actions, the process of learning values becomes more tangible and easier to internalize.

"Children here observe us, how we present ourselves as teachers, how we behave, so without realizing it, they imitate. We teach not only through words but also through actions that serve as examples for them" (Sartika, 2024).

This practice is also confirmed by the statements of Elvionita, who mention that role modeling must be accompanied by systematic guidance:

"In the school environment, we always provide good behavior examples for students so they can be modeled appropriately. The role model we

provide is certainly accompanied by guidance within the classroom” (Elvionita, 2024).

Behavioral stimulus can also be given through a reward system that encourages students to repeat positive actions. For example, through a positive reinforcement approach as done by Amin:

“Every time a student shows good behavior, like helping a friend or answering a question well, they get one star. When a student collects ten stars, I give a reward like a snack” (Amin, 2024).

Additionally, innovative use of technology can also serve as an effective behavioral stimulus in encouraging students to engage actively and enjoyably, as explained by Sandy:

“I use digital quiz apps, like Kahoot, Quizizz, or games... related to religious questions” (Sandy, 2024).

Using fun digital media not only makes students more interested but also helps form a positive attitude toward learning religion and fosters independent study habits. Thus, behavioral stimulus becomes an integral approach in education that is not only focused on learning outcomes but also on the formation of good character and habits that will last into students' futures.

The interview descriptions reinforce the stimulus-response theory in the psychology of religion, showing that warm and meaningful interpersonal interactions serve as stimuli that can elicit positive responses in the form of awareness, behavior, and religious commitment from students. Indonesian diaspora teachers indirectly internalize da'wah values through communicative, empathetic, and exemplary interaction patterns.

As Skinner explained, behavior formation can be achieved through the consistent provision of stimuli, which then elicits controlled responses through reinforcement. In this context, the teacher's stimuli in the form of affection, narrative approaches, and behavioral role modeling become positive reinforcers shaping students' religious responses.

Socially and culturally, the presence of diaspora teachers also serves as a source of cultural transmission, with teachers acting as bridges that convey Islamic values based on the traditions and historical experiences of Islam Nusantara. Through these social interactions, teachers can be transformative figures who shape students' personalities and religious values. The teaching process that combines cognitive, affective, and behavioral stimuli proves to be very effective in internalizing values of devotion and religious commitment in students.

4. CONCLUSIONS

From the discussion presented, it can be concluded that the approach adopted by diaspora teachers in their teaching not only focuses on the cognitive aspects and understanding of the material but also takes into account the affective and behavioral aspects of the students. Teachers play a crucial role in creating a learning environment

that supports not only academic development but also the emotional and behavioral growth of students. Cognitive stimuli provided through a gentle and appreciative approach help students better understand the material and foster their engagement in learning. Affective stimuli, such as attention and empathy, create deep emotional connections that strengthen students' self-confidence and motivation. Meanwhile, behavioral stimuli, through role modeling and positive reinforcement, lead to the formation of character and good habits in students. Overall, this approach demonstrates that holistic education, which involves cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects, plays an essential role in creating students who are intellectually, emotionally, and morally developed.

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