

Narrating Teacher Identity Across Generations in Rural Indonesia: Intersections of Professional, Moral, and Digital Resilience

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how teacher identity is constructed and negotiated across generations in rural Indonesia through narrative inquiry and ethnographic engagement. Drawing on the stories of twelve senior teachers and twelve student teachers, the research reveals how professional identity is deeply rooted in moral values of *pengabdian* (devotion) and community service, while continually redefined through changing educational contexts. The findings show that teaching remains a moral and relational vocation, yet increasingly mediated by technological adaptation and digital collaboration. Senior teachers exhibit digital resilience as they learn to integrate technology into pedagogical practices, while younger teachers demonstrate emerging forms of digital professional identity shaped by the use of online platforms, social media, and learning technologies. Generational differences in digital literacy and technological confidence highlight how identity formation now extends into digital spaces, where professional ethics meet technological innovation. By situating these narratives within the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, the study identifies how cross-generational mentoring enables mutual learning—senior teachers offering pedagogical and moral guidance, and student teachers sharing digital expertise. This reciprocal dynamic forms a contextual TPACK model rooted in rural cultural realities. The study concludes that teacher identity is being reconstructed through intergenerational dialogue and digital transformation, offering new insights into professional development and policy design for rural teacher education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession occupies a paradoxical position in both global and local contexts. It is consistently upheld as a moral cornerstone of societal progress, yet it often remains undercompensated and undervalued in policy and public investment. In developing countries like Indonesia, this contradiction is particularly stark. While national reforms have aimed to professionalize teaching through decentralization, certification programs, and performance standards (Alifia et al., 2022; Zen et al., 2024), the daily realities of many teachers—especially in rural and under-resourced areas—remain characterized by economic insecurity, bureaucratic pressures, and limited pedagogical autonomy. These disparities create a fertile context for examining how educators develop and sustain their professional identities.

Professional identity among teachers is widely regarded as a dynamic, narrative, and context-sensitive construct. It evolves through ongoing interactions between personal history, sociocultural norms, institutional expectations, and broader policy frameworks (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Sachs, 2001). In the Indonesian context, research suggests that teacher identity is deeply embedded within cultural values such as community service, religious duty, and familial responsibility (Makhsun et al., 2023; Syahnaz et al., 2023). Teachers often see their roles as educators, spiritual guides, moral exemplars, and social workers. This multi-dimensionality reflects a culturally specific narrative of vocation that complicates simplistic portrayals of professional development as linear or competency-based (Ahmad Madkur, 2024).

Emerging studies also show that teacher identity in Indonesia is shaped by ongoing negotiation between aspirations and systemic limitations. Student teachers often enter the profession with idealistic goals, inspired by former role models and a desire to contribute to nation-building (Arlinda et al., 2024; Purwaningsih et al., 2020). However, their field experiences frequently present dissonance, as they encounter poor infrastructure, policy inconsistencies, and lack of support—factors that erode their initial enthusiasm and contribute to professional fragility (Hanifah et al., 2022; Kasmiran, 2019). Conversely, senior teachers who have remained in the profession over decades often exhibit what Sachs (2001) termed an "activist identity," characterized by perseverance, advocacy, and moral resilience despite minimal institutional recognition. Their narratives reflect long-standing struggles with systemic inertia and rich experiences of transformation, adaptation, and community engagement (Suryaningrum, 2024; Taopan et al., 2025).

Despite the depth of research into teacher identity formation among novice and experienced teachers, a significant gap persists in intergenerational perspectives. Most existing studies examine identity in isolated generational or career-stage cohorts, missing the dialogic, cultural, and pedagogical transmissions across generations (Syahnaz et al., 2023; Usman et al., 2021). In many rural Indonesian contexts, teaching careers are influenced not only by institutional training but also by oral traditions, informal mentorship, and localized norms. An intergenerational approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of how identity is socially constructed, contested, and preserved within families, schools, and communities (Barkhuizen, 2016; Nguyen & Tesar, 2024).

At the same time, the rapid digital transformation of education—accelerated by global technological shifts and the COVID-19 pandemic—has added new dimensions to teacher identity. Teachers now negotiate not only moral and social expectations but also digital competencies and pedagogical innovation (El-Soussi, 2022; Yazici & Atay, 2023). The growing importance of digital literacy and online teaching practices requires teachers to integrate technology effectively into their professional practice, a capacity captured by the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Adipat et al., 2023; Niess, 2015). TPACK emphasizes that effective teachers must blend technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge to meet the demands of 21st-century

classrooms. Simultaneously, emerging scholarship on teachers' digital professional identity shows that the use of digital tools, online communities, and social media (e.g., TikTok, WhatsApp, and learning management systems) increasingly shapes how teachers see themselves and perform their professional roles (M. M. Gu & Lee, 2025; Ulla et al., 2024). For younger teachers, these tools represent opportunities for innovation and identity expression, while for senior teachers, they represent challenges of adaptation and digital resilience.

In this study, the intersecting dynamics of intergenerational experience and digital transformation are brought together to explore how teachers in rural Indonesia construct, sustain, and negotiate their professional identities across generations. By embedding the notion of digital professional identity and TPACK into the analysis, the study recognizes that teacher professionalism is not only relational and moral but also increasingly digital and technological in nature.

This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating the identity narratives of both senior and student teachers in the rural regency of Sumbawa, Indonesia. Sumbawa offers a compelling setting due to its economic marginalization, policy neglect, and strong cultural emphasis on education as moral labor. The study sheds light on continuities and ruptures in teacher identity formation by comparing how student teachers (4th semester) and senior teachers (aged 50+) articulate their professional journeys, values, and aspirations. It further integrates the researcher's autoethnography to ground the findings within the lived realities of the region, adding reflexive depth to the analysis.

Methodologically, the study is anchored in narrative inquiry—a framework well-suited for capturing identity as a storied phenomenon shaped by temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connely, 2000; Riessman, 2008). It maps the affective and cognitive dimensions of identity work across generational lines by drawing on interviews, student-led reflections, and prolonged field observations. Such an approach aligns with recent calls for research emphasizing teacher voice, contextual authenticity, and the moral-political dimensions of educational practice (Barkhuizen, 2016; Smith, 2008).

This research is situated within national and international discourses that frame teacher identity as central to educational reform, teacher retention, and professional learning (Q. Gu & Day, 2007; Sachs, 2001). In contexts where policy reform often outpaces practical infrastructure—such as in rural Indonesia—teachers are frequently positioned at the intersection of expectation and limitation. Adding a digital dimension to this discourse highlights that teacher identity development today involves learning to navigate hybrid professional spaces, balancing traditional values with new digital literacies. Their narratives offer critical insight into how systemic pressures are internalized, resisted, or redefined over time. This study contributes to a more equitable and grounded understanding of teacher professionalism by prioritizing human agency, resilience, and ethical commitment while attending to generational and contextual variation.

More practically, the study offers implications for teacher education, policy design, and intergenerational mentorship. In particular, it emphasizes the importance of narrative-based pedagogies, culturally responsive curricula, and cross-generational support structures. Such practices can support teacher retention, nurture reflective practitioners, and mitigate identity fragmentation, especially in resource-scarce environments (Hanifah et al., 2022; Taapan et al., 2025).

Accordingly, the study is guided by the following research questions: (1) How do senior and student teachers construct and narrate their professional identities in a rural Indonesian regency? (2) What commonalities and differences emerge in their experiences of professional challenges, resilience, and aspirations? (3) How do intergenerational narratives reflect and respond to systemic and digital tensions in the Indonesian education system? By engaging these questions, this article aims to enrich the discourse on teacher identity by integrating the perspectives of intergenerational learning and

digital transformation—advancing theoretical, practical, and policy-relevant insights for teacher education in technologically evolving, under-resourced rural contexts.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design grounded in narrative inquiry and ethnographic sensibilities to investigate how teacher identity is constructed across generations in rural Indonesia. Narrative inquiry was selected because of its capacity to reveal identity as a storied, temporal, and contextual phenomenon (Clandinin & Connely, 2000; Riessman, 2008). Complemented by the researcher's prolonged immersion and observation, the approach enabled a nuanced understanding of professional identity as co-constructed, contested, and sustained through lived experiences and storytelling.

The research was conducted in the Sumbawa, West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) regency, an economically marginalized island district with a strong tradition of valuing education despite systemic neglect. The region's average income is 60% of the national minimum wage, and many teachers work in underfunded, resource-constrained environments. These conditions provide a relevant sociocultural context for exploring the lived realities of teaching as moral labor.

Twenty-four participants were purposively selected across two generational cohorts. First, 12 senior teachers aged 50 years or above, with 17 to 39 years of teaching experience. Second, 12 student teachers enrolled in their 4th semester of a Bachelor of Education program, all having completed the "Teaching Profession" course. The selection followed maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2002), aiming to capture diverse experiences across age, gender, teaching background, and geographic placement. The senior teachers were identified through a capstone assignment in which each student interviewed one experienced teacher in their community. Subsequently, all students participated in reflective interviews conducted by the researcher. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and strict anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.

Three sources of qualitative data were triangulated. The first is semi-structured interviews with all 24 participants, averaging 45–70 minutes, recorded, transcribed verbatim, and translated where necessary. The second is reflective observation notes from the second researcher's prolonged engagement in local teacher education and school environments. The last is the student assignments and field reflections, which are written as part of their final project in the Teaching Profession course. Data collection spanned six months, with frequent site visits, informal school interactions, and access to classroom dynamics, community events, and peer discussion circles. This ethnographic immersion enhanced the depth and credibility of the findings (Emerson et al., 2011).

Digital tools also supported the research process. Some interviews and follow-up communications were conducted using mobile applications such as WhatsApp and Google Meet, which enabled continued dialogue despite geographic distance and participants' teaching schedules. Transcription and coding processes were assisted by digital transcription software (Otter.ai) and qualitative data management tools (NVivo 12), allowing for systematic retrieval of narrative segments and thematic connections. The researchers also analyzed digital traces within participants' accounts—such as references to social media use, digital teaching practices, or mobile learning—to explore how technology featured in their identity narratives.

Data were analyzed thematically using a multi-stage coding process based on Braun and Clarke's approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and adapted for narrative analysis. First, familiarisation involves reading and re-reading transcripts, field notes, and student assignments. Second, open coding includes initial line-by-line coding to identify meaningful units related to values, motivations, challenges, and identity. Third, axial coding categorizes codes into themes aligned with the research questions. Last, narrative synthesis interprets how participants constructed and performed their identities through

storytelling. An additional layer of analysis identified emergent subthemes related to digital literacy, technological adaptation, and professional digital identity, allowing the study to capture how technology mediated identity construction across generations.

Both inductive and theory-informed coding were used to identify cross-generational patterns and divergences. To ensure rigor, the study included peer debriefing, member checking with selected participants, and reflexive journaling to track researcher positionality and analytical decisions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mertens, 2014). Table 1 presents the visual mapping of RQs to data sources and analytical methods.

Table 1. Visual Mapping of RQs to Data Sources and Analytical Methods

Research Question	Data Source(s)	Analytical Technique
RQ1: How do senior and student teachers construct and narrate their professional identities?	Interview transcripts- Researcher field notes	Narrative and thematic analysis
RQ2: What commonalities and differences emerge in their experiences of professional challenges, resilience, and aspirations?	Interview transcripts- Student reflections- Researcher observations	Thematic coding, cross-case comparison
RQ3: How do intergenerational narratives reflect and respond to systemic tensions in the Indonesian education system?	Synthesized narratives- Researcher autoethnography	Thematic synthesis, contextual analysis

Researcher reflexivity was crucial in addressing the dual role of the first author as both teacher educator and local community member. This positionality provided cultural access but also required digital and ethical sensitivity. Given that parts of the communication and data sharing occurred through online platforms, the research adhered to digital ethics protocols (Markham & Buchanan, 2012), ensuring password-protected storage, anonymization of electronic data, and participant awareness of potential digital vulnerabilities. These practices aligned with recent methodological discussions on conducting narrative inquiry in hybrid (offline-online) contexts (Creswell & Guetterman, 2024; Ulla et al., 2024).

Ethical approval was obtained from the College Research Committee. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent and the right to withdraw. Given the close interaction between the researcher and the participants, steps were taken to mitigate power imbalances, including transparency in role disclosure, assurance of non-evaluative intent, and anonymization of all personal identifiers (Jazadi, 2014).

This study contributes methodologically by combining narrative inquiry and ethnography to study identity across generational lines. By incorporating digital tools and analytic attention to online interactions, the study also models a digitally reflexive approach to qualitative research in rural teacher education contexts. It positions student-conducted interviews as authentic pedagogical and research instruments, integrating autoethnographic reflection as an analytic and ethical layer in qualitative teacher research. These design features offer a template for similar identity-focused studies in other rural, under-researched educational settings.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section integrates findings with theoretical and contextual discussion to explore how senior and student teachers in rural Indonesia construct and sustain their professional identities across

generations. Drawing on thematic analysis of narratives, reflections, and observations, five major themes are synthesized: (1) Teaching as a Calling; (2) Negotiating Material and Moral Economies; (3) Navigating Identity and Role Fluidity; (4) Resilience through Adaptation and Reinvention; and (5) Hopeful Futures and Legacy Orientation. These findings are within broader discourses on teacher identity, rural education, and intergenerational learning. Autoethnographic reflection enabled the researcher to interpret participant narratives through lived familiarity with rural educational life, enhancing interpretive depth and ethical grounding (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Themes 1 and 3 address RQ1 on identity construction; themes 2 and 4 illuminate shared and diverging challenges (RQ2), while themes 4 and 5 capture the dialogic and systemic dimensions central to RQ3.

3.1 Teaching as a Calling

Across both generational cohorts, teaching was narrated as more than an occupation—it was perceived as a moral, spiritual, and community-oriented vocation. Senior teachers frequently drew on religious language and community values to describe their professional commitment:

"Teaching is my daily *ibadah* (worship). Even when there was barely enough for food, I stayed because my students' success was my reward." (T07)

"From the beginning, I just loved being a teacher. It was never about money." (T01)

This framing aligns with literature portraying professional identity as ethically and spiritually anchored, particularly in contexts where religious and cultural norms infuse daily life (Ahmad Madkur, 2024; Nguyen & Tesar, 2024). In rural Sumbawa, the social role of the teacher extends far beyond instructional delivery, becoming a vessel for communal aspirations, religious values, and local moral order. Student teachers also revealed deeply affective motives for entering the profession:

"I didn't choose teaching – it chose me. I want to contribute to children's character, not just their grades." (S11)

"Becoming a teacher has always been my dream. I feel happy when children understand because of me." (S01)

These statements resonate with "imagined professional selves" (Sfard & Prusak, 2005), where young teachers construct aspirational identities informed by cultural scripts and personal role models. The influence of family, community, and admired educators was a recurring theme, indicating that teacher identity is co-constructed long before formal training begins (Beijaard et al., 2004; Kroik, 2022). The researcher reflected:

"In Sumbawa, the teaching profession is still among the most accessible 'white collar' roles. Many choose it not for wealth, but to live a purposeful life."

This devotion mirrors what Sachs (Sachs, 2001) terms an "activist identity," rooted in moral clarity and service rather than institutional rewards. Such findings underscore the importance of culturally responsive teacher education that affirms local values rather than imposing technocratic metrics alone (Barkhuizen, 2016).

3.2 Negotiating Material and Moral Economies

Despite their idealism, both cohorts confronted the economic precarity of teaching. Senior teachers recalled enduring systemic neglect:

"I taught for 10 years without a fixed salary. Only rice from parents as thanks." (T09)

"We waited years for certification. Meanwhile, we juggled teaching and small trade just to survive." (T05)

These experiences reflect a persistent tension between material deprivation and moral vocation, reinforcing prior research on the informal moral economy that sustains rural teaching (Rahman & Kurniawan, 2022; Sandoval-Obando et al., 2023). Teachers are expected to embody virtue while being denied institutional support—a contradiction that can erode morale or deepen commitment (Pearce & Morrison, 2011). Student teachers, while optimistic, already strategized survival:

"I know the salary may be low, so I plan to tutor and maybe sell snacks." (S03)

"It may not be enough, but with careful budgeting and perhaps farming, I will manage." (S06)

These statements illustrate the anticipatory adaptation described by Gu and Day (2007), wherein early-career teachers brace for structural hardship through side incomes or community support. However, this normalization of precarity poses risks for long-term retention and satisfaction, especially in under-resourced contexts. The researcher noted:

"Most students come from low-income families. Their commitment to teaching is brave. They don't see quick money here but stay for the purpose."

Similar tensions between structural precarity and moral vocation have been observed in rural teaching contexts of Chile and Nepal (Sandoval-Obando et al., 2022; Subedi, 2023), suggesting a global pattern of identity formation under constraint. This theme underscores the need for policy reforms that address certification, performance metrics, and basic teacher welfare—particularly in rural regions where cost-of-living support and housing assistance could be game-changers (Alifia et al., 2022).

3.3 Navigating Identity and Role Fluidity

Teacher identity emerged as inherently dynamic and responsive to changing roles. Senior teachers articulated this evolution across decades:

"At first, I was strict and focused only on lessons. Now I'm also a counselor, parent, and community helper." (T03)

"We grow with our students. That's how identity matures." (T06)

This flexibility aligns with post-structuralist views of identity as performative and fluid (Barkhuizen, 2016; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Rather than a fixed role, teaching becomes an ever-adapting performance embedded in social expectations and student needs. Student teachers echoed this process of becoming:

"Sometimes I feel confident, sometimes lost. Teaching is harder than I thought." (S04)

"I'm still becoming. Every time I observe or interview a teacher, I imagine what kind of teacher I want to be." (S12)

Here, the tension between imagined and enacted identity becomes evident. As Sfard and Prusak (Sfard & Prusak, 2005) noted, identity work involves reconciling who one is, who one wants to be, and who the system allows one to become. Mentorship and field exposure serve as critical junctures for shaping these trajectories. The researcher's field note indicated:

"The profession is learned not only in class, but in the community. Identity is co-constructed through dialogue and immersion."

These insights highlight the pedagogical power of narrative inquiry itself—not just as a research tool, but as a medium for reflective identity development (Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Grillia & Daskolia, 2023).

3.4 Resilience through Adaptation and Reinvention

Resilience was universally emphasized, albeit through different modalities. Senior teachers celebrated endurance:

"We didn't have PowerPoint or Google. We used chalk, passion, and community respect." (T08)

"Even now, I try to learn WhatsApp and use my phone to contact students' parents." (T10)

These examples align with "generative resilience" (Subedi, 2023), where older teachers embody continuity by adapting without abandoning core values. Their adaptation reflects survivalist creativity born of necessity. Yet, this resilience has taken on new digital forms. Several senior teachers (e.g., T04, T05, T08) described the challenge of keeping pace with administrative digitization, government portals, and online lesson submissions. Teacher 5 remarked:

"Curriculum changes and adapting to new technology are the hardest. I ask my younger colleagues to help me send reports or upload assignments." (T05)

Such adaptive acts reflect not only persistence but what Niess (2018) and Adipat et al. (2023) define as Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) in practice — the interweaving of

pedagogy, technology, and content in contextually responsive ways. These senior teachers, though lacking formal training in digital tools, display a contextual TPACK emerging from experience and intergenerational collaboration rather than institutional workshops. Student teachers, in contrast, emphasized proactive transformation:

"We want to create engaging lessons using videos, games, and digital platforms." (S02)

"Adaptation is key. We're not just surviving; we want to transform." (S07)

These statements illustrate a proactive, innovation-driven resilience characteristic of digitally native generations, aligning with global discourses on 21st-century teaching (White & Moss, 2003; Sandoval-Obando et al., 2022). Student teachers' references to online resources, AI tools, and mobile learning highlight the role of digital literacy in shaping their professional identity and sense of agency (El-Soussi, 2022; Yazıcı & Atay, 2023).

Collectively, these interwoven narratives reveal that resilience in the digital era extends beyond endurance. It encompasses digital agility — the willingness to learn, unlearn, and re-learn technologies that continually reshape teaching practices. Senior teachers' ability to blend moral vocation with technological adaptation exemplifies digital resilience (Sun et al., 2022), while student teachers' technological creativity signals identity expansion through innovation. Resilience, therefore, emerges as an intergenerational construct sustained by cross-generational mentoring, where experience and innovation circulate as shared resources rather than competing ideologies.

3.5 Hopeful Futures and Legacy Orientation

Despite adversity, both cohorts articulated forward-facing visions. Senior teachers prioritized legacy:

"If I can inspire even one young teacher to stay in the profession, I'll retire fulfilled." (T11)

"We need more community among teachers. Not just mandates from above." (T04)

This resonates with the concept of professional "generativity" (Neupane et al., 2022), wherein late-career educators seek to transmit values and ensure institutional continuity. It also underscores the relational teaching ethic in rural settings (Preston, 2012). Student teachers imagined transformative futures:

"I want to teach in rural areas and show that learning can be joyful." (S05)

"Let's create inclusive schools where every child feels safe." (S10)

These ambitions reflect a commitment to social justice and educational equity, aligning with contemporary discourses on inclusive pedagogy and decolonizing curricula (Zen et al., 2024).

In the revised context of digital transformation, hope also becomes technologically mediated. Teacher 2 expressed a wish "for education to advance in line with the demands of the times," and Teacher 6 envisioned "a sustained spirit to advance education." Meanwhile, Student 10 pointed to "learning from countries like Japan that put teachers at the forefront of digital change." These statements show that, for both groups, technology symbolizes professionalism, relevance, and the aspiration to modernize education without losing moral purpose.

Across the cohorts, a pattern of cross-generational digital mentoring is evident. Senior teachers share pedagogical and moral values, while younger teachers reciprocate by introducing their mentors to digital grading systems, AI tools, and interactive online learning methods. This reciprocal mentoring echoes regional evidence that shared digital learning strengthens both professional identity and teaching efficacy (M. M. Gu & Lee, 2025; Ulla et al., 2024).

The researcher's field note indicated:

"Hope glows in both directions—seniors giving, juniors dreaming. It is no longer just moral or spiritual—it is also digital. Seniors hope to catch up; juniors hope to innovate. The profession survives on this loop of belief."

This continuum expands the TPACK framework into a moral-cultural dimension, where technology integration is not only technical but ethical and community-driven (Adipat et al., 2023). This

bidirectional hope is vital in contexts of policy stagnation and infrastructural neglect. It shows that, beyond compliance, identity is a site of resistance, renewal, aspiration, and digitalisation.

3.6 Synthesis and Theoretical Integration

Based on interview and observation data, Table 2 synthesizes the intergenerational identity themes, narratives, and theoretical anchors. Thus, all the themes affirm that professional identity in rural Indonesia is not a static trait but a process of ongoing negotiation, grounded in moral vision, shaped by hardship, and sustained through intergenerational dialogue. Both cohorts exhibit a shared ethic of care and purpose, but their expressions differ in response to contextual and generational pressures.

Table 2. Summary of Intergenerational Identity Themes, Narratives, and Theoretical Anchors

Theme	Senior Teachers	Student Teachers	Theoretical Anchors
Teaching as Calling	Spiritual devotion; lifelong service framed as <i>ibadah</i> (worship) and moral duty	Inspired by admired teachers and community role models, mission-driven motivation.	Identity as value-laden and faith-informed (Ahmad Madkur, 2024; Nguyen & Tesar, 2024; Sachs, 2001)
Material vs. Moral Economy	I have remained unpaid for years and have bartered services; I survived via community support and informal labor.	Anticipate financial struggle; plan side jobs (e.g., tutoring, small business) to sustain teaching goals.	Professionalism amid structural precarity (Pearce & Morrison, 2011; Rahman & Kurniawan, 2022)
Role and Identity Fluidity	Role evolved from disciplinarian to mentor, counselor, and community liaison.	Identity in flux; shaped by reflection, observation, and dialogic experiences	Post-structural identity as evolving and context-dependent (Barkhuizen, 2016; Beijaard et al., 2004)
Resilience and Adaptation	Technological adaptation despite limited resources; commitment to continuity	Digitally fluent; proactive use of tools to reimagine pedagogy	Generative resilience and identity flexibility (Sandoval-Obando et al., 2022; Subedi, 2023)
Legacy and Vision	Prioritize mentorship, institutional memory, and value transmission	Emphasize transformation, inclusivity, and educational justice	Future selves as motivational anchors (Neupane et al., 2022; Sfard & Prusak, 2005)

These findings also advance theoretical conversations by demonstrating that identity construction is dialogic and reflexive (Clandinin & Connely, 2000), particularly when informed by culturally embedded pedagogical narratives. The narrative inquiry method became a vehicle for identity rehearsal, allowing participants to reflect, reframe, and reimagine their roles in the profession.

Importantly, this study brings rural epistemologies into focus. Teaching in Sumbawa is not just instructional work but cultural stewardship, moral leadership, and social service. Teacher identity here is embedded in familial networks, religious convictions, and communal expectations. Such insights call for educational policies responsive to local realities rather than abstract standards (Usman et al., 2021).

Thus, the integrated analysis in this section reveals that teacher identity in rural Indonesia is simultaneously grounded and generative—rooted in tradition but evolving through reflection, dialogue, and resilience. Across generations, teachers carry forward a professional narrative defined not by resources, but by relational purpose, moral clarity, and adaptive strength. These findings highlight the potential of narrative, intergenerational inquiry to illuminate and support identity development in marginalized educational contexts.

3.7 Policy and Practice Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for teacher education, policy reform, and rural professional development. First, intergenerational mentoring should be formally embedded within teacher training curricula. Programs that pair senior and student teachers can enhance reflective practice, preserve cultural knowledge, and foster resilience. These mentoring initiatives should also integrate digital dimensions, enabling reciprocal learning in which senior teachers share pedagogical wisdom while younger teachers provide guidance in digital tools, online learning management systems, and multimedia-based instruction. Such cross-generational digital mentoring promotes continuity of professional values while strengthening technological competence.

Second, national policies must differentiate support for rural educators, addressing their unique socio-economic and infrastructural constraints. In doing so, policy makers should prioritize digital equity by ensuring reliable internet connectivity, affordable devices, and ongoing professional development programs centered on Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK). Embedding TPACK-based training in rural teacher education would equip teachers to design context-appropriate digital lessons and to integrate technology with cultural and moral awareness.

Finally, teacher certification and incentive schemes must align more closely with localized needs and identities, recognizing the moral and communal dimensions of rural teaching. At the same time, these systems should include digital-readiness indicators that reward innovative, technology-supported pedagogy and participation in community-based digital learning initiatives. Strengthening digital infrastructure, funding open-access training, and establishing regional support hubs can sustain teachers' digital resilience and long-term professional growth.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined how teacher identity is constructed, challenged, and sustained across two generational cohorts, senior teachers and student teachers, in the under-resourced rural regency of Sumbawa, Indonesia. Guided by three research questions, the study explored (1) how professional identity is formed across generations, (2) what commonalities and divergences exist in these identity narratives, and (3) how such intergenerational perspectives respond to systemic and digital challenges in the Indonesian education system. Through a qualitative design rooted in narrative inquiry and enriched by researcher observation and student-led interviews, five key themes emerged: teaching as a calling, negotiation between moral and material economies, role and identity fluidity, resilience through adaptation, and hopeful visions of legacy.

The findings reveal that teacher identity is not a static construct but a lifelong, dialogic process embedded in personal values, cultural expectations, and lived institutional realities. This study's senior and student teachers framed teaching as a spiritually motivated and morally grounded vocation. This deeply held belief functioned as a stabilizing force that helped participants reconcile their professional purpose with often difficult working conditions. Despite differences in age, experience, and pedagogical tools, both groups exhibited a shared service ethic—although their methods diverged. Senior teachers drew upon experience, routine, and resilience forged through hardship, while student teachers articulated more aspirational visions grounded in inclusivity, technological adaptability, and transformation.

At the same time, this study demonstrates that the moral and social foundations of Indonesian teacher identity now evolve within a rapidly changing digital landscape. Teachers' identity formation increasingly involves negotiating technological demands, online pedagogical tools, and digital communication networks. Senior teachers' engagement with applications such as WhatsApp, PowerPoint, and online portals reflects a growing sense of digital resilience—the ability to adapt to technology-driven reforms without losing moral purpose or pedagogical integrity. Meanwhile, student teachers' enthusiasm for digital storytelling, social media learning, and AI-assisted lesson planning

illustrates emergent forms of digital professional identity consistent with the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework. These processes indicate that teacher identity is being reconfigured as a hybrid of moral vocation and technological competence.

The intergenerational encounters documented in this study reveal a reciprocal mentoring model that bridges experience with innovation. Senior teachers transmit pedagogical wisdom and moral values, while student teachers reciprocate with digital skills and creative approaches to online learning. This exchange produces what may be termed a contextual TPACK—a culturally grounded and ethically informed adaptation of the TPACK framework suited to Indonesia's rural teaching realities. In this sense, teacher identity is not simply preserved across generations but continuously reconstructed through shared technological learning, reflective dialogue, and digital collaboration.

Importantly, the rural context of this study cannot be overlooked. A unique moral economy shapes teachers' identity in regions like Sumbawa, where infrastructure is lacking and economic hardship is common. Teachers are not merely functionaries of the state but cultural custodians, moral guides, and community mediators. Their professional identities are deeply relational, often extending beyond the classroom into social and familial realms. The profession's precarious financial footing only deepens the relevance of identity as a source of resilience and purpose. In the digital era, these same rural educators demonstrate how contextual barriers can inspire innovation, as limited access drives creative use of technology and peer mentoring for professional growth.

This study also has clear implications for educational policy, teacher training, and professional development. First, national policies for teacher certification and incentive structures must consider rural educators' specific needs and capacities. Uniform standards, while well-intentioned, may inadvertently marginalize those working in under-resourced contexts. Policies must now also address digital equity and provide tailored digital capacity-building for rural teachers, ensuring access to devices, connectivity, and training suited to their contexts. Second, teacher education programs should integrate narrative-based and technology-infused pedagogies that allow student teachers to explore their identity development through reflective writing, dialogic assignments, and intergenerational, digitally mediated engagement. Finally, schools and education departments should invest in sustainable digital mentorship models that bridge experience with innovation, ensuring senior teachers can contribute to institutional memory while supporting the next generation.

In conclusion, becoming and remaining a teacher in rural Indonesia is neither a passive act nor a linear journey. It is a multidimensional, reflective, and often sacrificial commitment shaped by values, community, policy, and lived struggle. In today's hybrid educational landscape, this commitment extends into digital spaces where moral integrity, cultural belonging, and technological adaptability converge. Digital transformation, rather than eroding traditional values, can serve as a bridge between generations—linking devotion with innovation, and experience with digital fluency. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how professional identity is formed and sustained across time and generations. It highlights that teacher identity in rural Indonesia is best understood as an evolving synthesis of moral ethics, cultural rootedness, and digital competence. This identity is both enduring and adaptive, local and global.

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