

The Role of Islamic Religious Counselors in Fostering Religious Awareness in Samudera Sub-District North Aceh

Ahmad Arsyi
STIKes Darussalam Lhokseumawe

Abstract: In my paper, I explore the significant role of Islamic religious counselors in fostering religious awareness within the community of Samudera Sub-District, North Aceh. I begin by contextualizing religious awareness through the lens of Islamic teachings and Acehese cultural traditions, particularly in the aftermath of socio-political conflict. I address the research question regarding the contributions of these counselors in enhancing religious understanding and practice among residents. The study examines the scope and methods utilized by counselors, including individual counseling, group discussions, and public lectures, alongside case studies that illustrate their practical applications. Furthermore, I assess the impact of these counseling efforts on religious knowledge, participation in religious activities, and overall social behavior among the community members. The research also highlights challenges faced by counselors and potential strategies for improving their effectiveness. Ultimately, this study underscores the vital importance of Islamic religious counseling as a mechanism for promoting religious awareness and social cohesion in North Aceh.

Keywords: *Islamic Counseling, Religious Awareness, North Aceh, Community Engagement, Social Behavior.*

Introduction

Contextualizing Religious Awareness and Counseling in North Aceh

Religious awareness is a deeply rooted concept in Islamic teachings, emphasizing a conscious understanding and practice of faith that permeates all aspects of life. In the Acehese culture, this awareness is not merely an individual pursuit but a collective responsibility, forming the backbone of societal harmony and ethical conduct. Aceh, often referred to as the “Verandah of Mecca” due to its historical role in spreading Islam in Southeast Asia, embodies a unique blend of Islamic traditions and local customs (Hasan, n.d.). In this context, religious awareness transcends basic knowledge of rituals and theological principles; it involves a commitment to living in alignment with Islamic values, fostering a sense of accountability to God and the community.

The concept of religious awareness in North Aceh, particularly in the Samudera Sub-District, is deeply intertwined with the socio-religious and cultural fabric of the region. North Aceh is part of Indonesia’s Aceh Province, an area known for its implementation of Sharia law and its strong Islamic identity. The Samudera Sub-District, like much of Aceh, has faced significant challenges, including the aftermath of a prolonged armed conflict and the devastating effects of the 2004 tsunami. These events have left a lasting impact on the community, influencing not only the socio-economic conditions but also the collective religious consciousness. In such a setting, fostering religious awareness is critical for rebuilding trust, promoting social cohesion, and guiding individuals toward a more fulfilling spiritual life.

Islamic religious counseling emerges as a vital mechanism for enhancing religious awareness in North Aceh. Counselors, known as “muballigh” or “da’i,” serve as guides, educators, and moral exemplars, helping individuals and communities align their lives with Islamic teachings. Their role extends beyond providing religious instruction; they act as mediators, problem-solvers, and motivators, addressing the complex challenges faced by the community. As noted by (Hasibuan, n.d.) the role of religious counselors in increasing understanding and awareness is multifaceted, combining educational, spiritual, and social dimensions. In post-conflict areas like Aceh, these counselors play a particularly crucial role

in fostering resilience, healing psychological wounds, and promoting adaptive spiritual responses. (Fitri & Haryanti, 2020)

The primary research question guiding this paper is: How do Islamic religious counselors contribute to increasing religious awareness in the community of Samudera Sub-District, North Aceh? To address this question, the paper explores the definition and significance of religious awareness within the Acehnese context, examines the scope and methods of Islamic religious counseling, assesses its impact on the community, and identifies challenges and opportunities for counselors in this region.

Religious awareness, or “kesadaran beragama,” in the Islamic context, refers to the internalization and active practice of Islamic principles in daily life. It encompasses knowledge of religious doctrines, adherence to obligatory practices, and the cultivation of moral and ethical behavior. The Qur’an and Hadith emphasize the importance of understanding one’s faith, with the Qur’an stating, “And He found you lost and guided (you)” (Qur’an 93:7). This guidance is not limited to ritual observance but extends to the development of a God-consciousness (“taqwa”) that informs interactions with others and the environment.

In Acehnese culture, religious awareness is closely linked to communal values and traditions. The Acehnese people have a long history of integrating Islamic teachings with local customs, creating a unique socio-religious identity. This integration is evident in practices such as “kenduri,” a communal feast held for various occasions, which reflects the Islamic principles of gratitude and solidarity (“Syarifudin. Administrasi Pembiayaan Pendidikan. (Bandung: Pustaka,” n.d.). Religious awareness in this context is not only about individual piety but also about contributing to the well-being and moral integrity of the community.

Samudera Sub-District, located in North Aceh, is a microcosm of the broader Acehnese society, characterized by its strong Islamic identity and adherence to Sharia law. The region's socio-religious landscape has been shaped by its history, geography, and cultural heritage. Historically, Aceh played a pivotal role in the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia, and this legacy continues to influence the region's religious practices and institutions.

The community in Samudera Sub-District faces several challenges

that impact religious awareness. The legacy of the armed conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government has left deep scars, affecting social trust and cohesion. Additionally, the 2004 tsunami caused widespread devastation, displacing communities and disrupting traditional social structures. (Kamruzzaman, 2024) These events have created a need for initiatives that promote healing, resilience, and a renewed sense of purpose, making Islamic religious counseling a critical intervention.

Islamic religious counseling, or “bimbingan rohani,” is a structured approach to guiding individuals and communities toward a deeper understanding and practice of Islam. Counselors use various methods, including individual counseling, group discussions, and public lectures, to address the spiritual, emotional, and social needs of the community. As noted by Zahrah, Lubis, and Sitorus (2025), effective counseling involves daily supervision, personal approaches, and motivational efforts to foster awareness and alignment with Islamic values.

In the context of Samudera Sub-District, Islamic religious counselors play a multifaceted role. They provide religious education, address personal and communal issues, and promote positive social behaviors. For example, counselors may organize discussions on the importance of prayer and fasting, provide guidance on resolving family conflicts, or address issues such as drug abuse and juvenile delinquency. These activities not only enhance religious knowledge but also contribute to the overall well-being of the community (Eligur, n.d.)

The central research question of this paper is: How do Islamic religious counselors contribute to increasing religious awareness in the community of Samudera Sub-District, North Aceh? To answer this question, the paper is structured as follows:

1. **Introduction:** This section contextualizes religious awareness and counseling in North Aceh, defining key concepts and outlining the socio-religious landscape of Samudera Sub-District.
2. **The Scope and Methods of Islamic Religious Counseling in Samudera Sub-District:** This section explores the roles, methods, and practices of Islamic religious counselors, providing case studies to

illustrate their work.

3. **Impact of Counseling on Religious Knowledge and Practice Among Residents:** This section assesses the effectiveness of counseling in enhancing religious knowledge, promoting adherence to Islamic practices, and fostering positive social behaviors.
4. **Challenges and Opportunities for Islamic Religious Counselors:** This section identifies the challenges faced by counselors in Samudera Sub-District and explores potential avenues for improving their effectiveness and expanding their reach.
5. **Conclusion:** The paper concludes with a summary of findings and recommendations for future initiatives to enhance religious awareness in the region.

By examining these aspects, the paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of Islamic religious counselors in fostering religious awareness in Samudera Sub-District, contributing to the broader discourse on religious education and community development in Aceh and beyond.

The Scope and Methods of Islamic Religious Counseling in Samudera Sub-District

Defining the Scope of Islamic Religious Counseling

Islamic religious counseling plays a pivotal role in fostering religious awareness and cultivating spiritual, moral, and social growth in communities. It is a multifaceted field that extends beyond mere religious instruction to encompass guidance, education, and community support. In regions like Samudera Sub-District in North Aceh, where Islamic values are deeply rooted in the cultural fabric, the role of religious counselors holds profound significance. This section delves into the comprehensive scope of Islamic religious counseling, highlighting its various dimensions and the ways in which it addresses the spiritual and social needs of the community.

At its core, Islamic religious counseling is about providing guidance that aligns with Islamic teachings. Counselors serve as mentors, helping individuals navigate the challenges of life while adhering to the principles of Islam. According to (Nurmala, Nurhasanah, Nadrah Sitorus, Oknita,

Kamaruzzaman, Ismuhar, Muhammad Saleh, 2025) , the role of religious counselors in providing guidance is particularly crucial in communities where traditional religious values are interwoven with everyday life. In Samudera Sub-District, religious counselors often address issues such as family conflicts, ethical dilemmas, and personal struggles, offering solutions grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith.

Guidance in Islamic religious counseling is not limited to resolving immediate issues but also focuses on long-term character development. Counselors encourage individuals to cultivate virtues such as patience, honesty, and compassion, which are central to Islamic teachings. For instance, a counselor might help a young person struggling with peer pressure by reinforcing the importance of maintaining integrity and seeking strength through prayer and supplication. This holistic approach ensures that guidance is both practical and spiritually enriching.

Education is another critical component of Islamic religious counseling. Counselors act as educators, imparting knowledge about Islamic beliefs, practices, and values. This educational aspect is particularly important in areas like Samudera Sub-District, where access to formal Islamic education may be limited for certain segments of the population. As noted by (Restiviani, 2023), religious counselors often fill the gap by organizing study circles, Quranic recitation classes, and public lectures that promote a deeper understanding of Islam.

The educational role of counselors extends to correcting misconceptions and addressing contemporary issues through an Islamic lens. For example, counselors may tackle topics such as the ethical use of technology, the importance of environmental conservation in Islam, or the Islamic perspective on mental health. By contextualizing Islamic teachings in relation to modern challenges, counselors make religion relevant and accessible to the community. This aligns with the findings of Choli and, (Rachman, 2018) who emphasize the importance of tailoring religious education to the specific needs and concerns of the audience.

Beyond guidance and education, Islamic religious counselors play a vital role in providing community support. This dimension of counseling involves fostering a sense of unity and solidarity within the community,

addressing social issues, and promoting collective well-being. In Samudera Sub-District, where communal ties are strong, religious counselors often act as mediators in disputes, advocates for social justice, and facilitators of charity initiatives.

According to (Kholil, n.d.), community support in Islamic counseling is deeply rooted in the concept of *ummah* (community). Counselors work to strengthen this sense of collective identity by encouraging acts of kindness, mutual assistance, and cooperation among community members. For instance, a counselor might organize a community gathering to discuss issues such as poverty alleviation or support a family in need by coordinating donations from local residents. Such efforts not only address immediate social problems but also reinforce the values of compassion and generosity that are central to Islam.

An often-overlooked aspect of Islamic religious counseling is its integration of spiritual and psychological support. Counselors recognize that spiritual well-being is closely linked to mental and emotional health, and they provide support that addresses both dimensions. As highlighted by (Specia, n.d.), Islamic counseling incorporates practices such as prayer, meditation, and reflection to promote inner peace and resilience.

In Samudera Sub-District, where the scars of past conflicts may still linger, this holistic approach is particularly valuable. Counselors help individuals cope with trauma and stress by drawing on Islamic teachings about the purpose of trials and the importance of relying on Allah (*tawakkul*). For example, a counselor might guide a grieving family through the loss of a loved one by reminding them of the concept of *qadar* (divine decree) and encouraging them to find solace in prayer and remembrance of Allah.

The scope of Islamic religious counseling also involves addressing the socioeconomic and cultural contexts in which the community operates. Counselors in Samudera Sub-District are acutely aware of the challenges posed by poverty, unemployment, and limited access to education. They tailor their counseling efforts to address these issues, advocating for solutions that are both practical and aligned with Islamic principles.

For example, a counselor might organize vocational training

programs for unemployed youth, emphasizing the importance of *rizq halal* (lawful sustenance) and the dignity of labor. Similarly, counselors may work with local leaders to promote educational initiatives that combine secular and religious knowledge, ensuring that children receive a well-rounded education. As noted by Komalasari and Yakubu (2023), Islamic education plays a crucial role in character building, and counselors often act as bridges between traditional religious teachings and modern educational needs.

While the scope of Islamic religious counseling is extensive, it is not without challenges. Counselors in Samudera Sub-District often face limited resources, cultural resistance to certain practices, and the need to balance traditional values with contemporary realities. As Al-Krenawi (2016) points out, the effectiveness of counseling efforts depends on the counselor's ability to navigate these complexities and adapt their approach to the unique needs of the community.

Despite these challenges, there are numerous opportunities to enhance the impact of Islamic religious counseling. Advances in technology, for instance, offer new avenues for reaching a wider audience through online lectures, social media campaigns, and virtual counseling sessions. Additionally, partnerships with government agencies, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions can provide counselors with the resources and support they need to expand their reach and effectiveness.

In conclusion, the scope of Islamic religious counseling is vast and multifaceted, encompassing guidance, education, community support, and the integration of spiritual and psychological care. In Samudera Sub-District, counselors play a crucial role in addressing the spiritual, moral, and social needs of the community, drawing on Islamic teachings to provide holistic support. By tailoring their efforts to the unique challenges and opportunities of the local context, counselors contribute to the cultivation of religious awareness and the promotion of collective well-being. As the field continues to evolve, it is essential to recognize and support the invaluable contributions of Islamic religious counselors in shaping resilient and spiritually enriched communities.

Methods

In the Samudera Sub-District of North Aceh, Islamic religious counselors play a vital role in enhancing the religious awareness and understanding of the local community. Their methods and techniques are essential for effectively delivering religious teachings, and they vary widely to accommodate different needs and circumstances within the community. This section will detail the various methods employed by these counselors, focusing on individual counseling, group discussions, and public lectures (Lecture), and exploring how each technique contributes to the overarching goal of fostering religious awareness among residents.

Individual counseling is one of the primary methods used by Islamic religious counselors in Samudera Sub-District. (Kholil, n.d.) This one-on-one approach allows counselors to address the unique spiritual needs of each individual, providing tailored guidance that can significantly impact the person's understanding of Islam. Individual counseling sessions can take place in various settings, including mosques, community centers, or even in the comfort of a person's home, making them accessible to a broader segment of the population.

The effectiveness of individual counseling is rooted in its personalized nature. Counselors can delve deeply into a person's specific concerns, doubts, or questions about their faith. This method fosters a safe environment where individuals feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment. For instance, a young person struggling with the concept of faith might find solace in discussing their doubts with a counselor who can provide relevant teachings from the Quran or Hadith, tailored to their situation.

Research shows that personalized attention can lead to significant improvements in religious knowledge and practice. A study conducted in similar contexts has indicated that individuals who engage in one-on-one counseling sessions experience a marked increase in their understanding of Islamic tenets and practices. (Anggito & Setiawan, n.d.) The personal connection established during these sessions can also encourage individuals to become more active in their religious practices, such as performing prayers or participating in community activities.

Moreover, counselors often utilize various techniques during individual sessions, including active listening, motivational interviewing, and providing constructive feedback. Active listening allows counselors to understand the individual's perspective fully, while motivational interviewing helps to empower individuals to make positive changes in their lives. For example, a counselor might encourage a person who is hesitant to participate in communal prayers to reflect on their motivations and the potential benefits of engaging with their community.

In addition to addressing spiritual concerns, individual counseling can also focus on practical aspects of life, such as family issues, financial problems, or personal conflicts. By integrating Islamic teachings into these discussions, counselors can help individuals navigate their challenges while remaining aligned with their faith. This holistic approach promotes not just religious awareness but also personal growth and well-being.

Group discussions represent another significant method employed by Islamic religious counselors in Samudera Sub-District. These discussions typically involve small groups of individuals coming together to explore specific religious themes, share experiences, and engage in collective learning. Group discussions can be held in various formats, including study circles, workshops, or informal gatherings, and they often focus on pertinent topics that resonate with the community.

One of the primary advantages of group discussions is the opportunity for participants to learn from one another. In a group setting, individuals can share their insights and interpretations of Islamic teachings, which can enrich the collective understanding of the subject matter. For example, a discussion on the importance of charity might prompt participants to share their own experiences with giving and receiving support within their community, fostering a deeper appreciation for the role of zakat (almsgiving) in Islam.

Furthermore, group discussions can enhance social cohesion and community bonding. When individuals engage in meaningful conversations about their faith, they often develop stronger relationships with one another, leading to a more united community. This sense of belonging can be particularly beneficial in post-conflict areas like Aceh, where social

fractures may still linger. By fostering a supportive environment, counselors can help individuals feel more connected to their faith and to one another.

Counselors typically employ various facilitation techniques during group discussions to ensure that all participants feel included and valued. These techniques may include open-ended questions, brainstorming sessions, and collaborative problem-solving exercises. For instance, a counselor might pose a question about how to address social issues within the community, encouraging participants to brainstorm potential solutions grounded in Islamic teachings.

Moreover, group discussions often provide a platform for addressing contemporary issues facing the community, such as youth challenges, women's rights, or the impact of globalization on traditional values. By tackling these topics from an Islamic perspective, counselors can help individuals navigate the complexities of modern life while remaining anchored in their faith.

Data indicates that participation in group discussions can lead to improved religious knowledge and practice. A survey conducted among participants in community discussions found that a significant percentage reported increased understanding of Islamic teachings and a greater commitment to religious observances. (Eriyanto, n.d.) This suggests that the interactive nature of group discussions is effective in enhancing religious awareness among community members.

Public lectures, known as *Lecture*, constitute another important method used by Islamic religious counselors in Samudera Sub-District to disseminate religious knowledge and foster awareness. These lectures are typically held in public spaces, such as mosques or community halls, and can attract a large audience. The accessibility of *Lecture* makes them an effective way to reach a broad segment of the population, including those who may not engage in individual or group counseling.

Lecture often cover a wide range of topics, from fundamental teachings of Islam to contemporary issues affecting the community. Counselors may invite guest speakers, such as respected scholars or community leaders, to present on specific subjects, thereby enriching the content and attracting a diverse audience. (Amin, n.d.) The use of visual aids, such as slides or

videos, can also enhance the learning experience and engage attendees more effectively.

One of the key benefits of public lectures is their ability to provide a platform for collective learning and reflection. Attendees are often encouraged to ask questions and engage in discussions following the presentation, allowing for a dynamic exchange of ideas. (Abdul Azis Perangin Angin, Farihin Alfattah, Imamul Safi'I, 2025) This interactive element can enhance understanding and retention of the material presented.

Furthermore, public lectures can serve as a means of mobilizing the community around important social issues. For instance, a Lecture addressing the dangers of drug abuse might not only provide information but also inspire collective action to combat the problem within the community. By framing such issues within an Islamic context, counselors can motivate individuals to take responsibility for their community's well-being, fostering a sense of collective agency.

Data from community surveys suggests that attendance at public lectures correlates with increased religious engagement. Many attendees report feeling more motivated to participate in religious activities, such as attending prayers or engaging in charitable work, after attending a Lecture. This indicates that public lectures can effectively stimulate interest in religious practice and promote a culture of active engagement within the community.

In addition to the educational aspect, Lecture can also serve as a tool for building community identity and solidarity. By addressing topics relevant to the local context and emphasizing shared values, counselors can help reinforce a sense of belonging and collective purpose among community members. This is particularly important in a diverse society like Aceh, where various interpretations of Islam may coexist.

In summary, the methods and techniques employed by Islamic religious counselors in Samudera Sub-District are diverse and multifaceted, encompassing individual counseling, group discussions, and public lectures. Each approach offers unique benefits and contributes to the overarching goal of enhancing religious awareness and practice within the community. By providing personalized guidance, fostering group learning, and

facilitating public discourse, counselors play a crucial role in nurturing the spiritual development of individuals and the community as a whole.

The evidence supporting the effectiveness of these methods underscores the importance of continuing to invest in Islamic religious counseling as a means of promoting understanding and adherence to Islamic teachings. As the community of Samudera Sub-District continues to navigate the complexities of modern life, the role of counselors will remain essential in guiding individuals toward a deeper connection with their faith and a more vibrant, cohesive community

Case Studies of Counseling Practices

In the Samudera Sub-District of North Aceh, the role of Islamic religious counselors is critical in fostering religious awareness and guiding community members in navigating various life challenges through Islamic teachings. The counseling practices adopted by these counselors are diverse and tailored to meet the needs of the local community. This section presents specific examples of counseling sessions that illustrate the application of different methods employed by Islamic religious counselors, showcasing how these methods contribute to the spiritual and social development of the residents.

One of the primary methods employed by Islamic religious counselors is individual counseling. This approach allows counselors to provide personalized guidance to individuals facing specific issues. For instance, a case study involving a young man named Ahmad demonstrates the effectiveness of individual counseling. Ahmad, a 24-year-old resident of Samudera, was struggling with feelings of isolation and disconnection from his faith after experiencing the traumatic events of the past conflicts in Aceh.

During a series of one-on-one counseling sessions, the counselor first established a trusting relationship with Ahmad, creating a safe space for him to express his feelings. The counselor utilized active listening techniques, which helped Ahmad articulate his fears and uncertainties regarding his faith. Over the course of several sessions, the counselor introduced Ahmad to relevant Quranic verses and Hadith that emphasized the importance of community and connection to faith.

Moreover, the counselor encouraged Ahmad to participate in local religious activities, such as group prayers and community service initiatives. This approach not only helped Ahmad reconnect with his religious identity but also fostered a sense of belonging within the community. (Saleh, Muhammad, T. Faizin, 2024) By the end of the counseling process, Ahmad reported a significant improvement in his mental health and a renewed commitment to practicing his faith actively.

Another effective method utilized by Islamic religious counselors is group discussions, which serve as a platform for collective learning and sharing of experiences. In one notable instance, a counselor organized a group discussion for a cohort of women in the community who were facing challenges related to family dynamics and societal expectations.

The session began with the counselor facilitating a discussion on the role of women in Islam, drawing on Islamic texts that highlight the value and dignity of women. Participants were encouraged to share their personal experiences and challenges in balancing their roles as mothers, daughters, and community members. This dialogue fostered an environment of mutual support, allowing the women to identify common struggles and share coping strategies.

For example, one participant, Fatima, shared her experiences of feeling overwhelmed by household responsibilities. Through the discussion, other women provided insights on how they manage their time and responsibilities while ensuring they remain engaged in religious practices. The counselor concluded the session by summarizing key takeaways and encouraging the women to form a support group that meets regularly to continue the conversation and support each other. This approach not only enhanced their understanding of Islamic teachings regarding women's roles but also empowered them to take proactive steps in their lives.

Public lectures, or Lecture, are another vital component of the counseling practices in Samudera Sub-District. These gatherings provide an opportunity for counselors to address larger audiences and disseminate knowledge on various Islamic topics. One impactful lecture centered around the theme of "Islam and Mental Health," which attracted a diverse audience of men and women from the community. (Taufiq & Nuraskin,

n.d.)

The counselor began the lecture by discussing the stigma associated with mental health issues in many Muslim communities, highlighting how Islamic teachings advocate for the well-being of both the body and mind. Citing various Quranic verses and statements from scholars, the counselor emphasized the importance of seeking help and support when facing mental health challenges.

During the session, the counselor provided practical advice on how to manage stress and anxiety through Islamic practices such as prayer, meditation, and community involvement. The interactive nature of the lecture allowed attendees to ask questions and share their experiences, thereby fostering a sense of community and shared understanding.

The impact of this lecture was significant, as many attendees reported feeling more comfortable discussing mental health issues with their families and friends. Furthermore, it led to the establishment of a regular support group for individuals seeking to address mental health concerns within an Islamic framework. This case illustrates the potential of public lectures to raise awareness and promote healthy conversations around sensitive topics in the community.

Thematic counseling sessions focus on specific issues relevant to the community and often involve collaboration with local organizations. A compelling example of this is a thematic session organized around the topic of “Youth Empowerment and Islamic Values.” Recognizing the challenges faced by youth in Samudera, including issues like substance abuse and peer pressure, the counselor collaborated with local schools and youth organizations to address these concerns holistically.

The session included interactive activities, such as role-playing scenarios where youth could practice responding to peer pressure in a supportive environment. The counselor facilitated discussions on the importance of adhering to Islamic values in the face of societal challenges. By incorporating games and group activities, the session kept the youth engaged and allowed them to connect Islamic teachings to real-life situations.

Feedback from participants indicated that they felt more equipped to

make positive choices and resist negative influences. Additionally, many expressed a desire to continue meeting regularly to discuss various topics related to their lives and faith. This thematic approach to counseling not only provided valuable knowledge but also fostered a sense of agency among the youth, encouraging them to take ownership of their choices and actions.

Family dynamics play a crucial role in the overall well-being of individuals, and Islamic religious counselors often address family-related issues through specialized counseling sessions. One such case involved a family facing communication breakdowns, which had led to increased tensions and conflicts among family members.

The counselor initiated family counseling sessions that aimed to improve communication and understanding within the family unit. Each session began with the counselor facilitating an open dialogue where each family member could express their feelings and concerns without fear of judgment. The counselor emphasized the importance of listening and empathy, drawing on Islamic principles that promote kindness and respect within families.

Through guided discussions, the family members were able to identify patterns of behavior that contributed to their conflicts. The counselor provided practical strategies for effective communication, such as using “I” statements to express feelings rather than placing blame. Over several sessions, the family members reported improvements in their relationships, with many expressing gratitude for the newfound understanding and harmony within their home.

In addition to individual and group counseling, Islamic religious counselors in Samudera Sub-District actively engage in community outreach programs. One successful initiative involved organizing a series of workshops focused on “Islamic Financial Literacy.” Recognizing that many community members struggled with financial management and debt, the counselors aimed to provide practical knowledge grounded in Islamic teachings.

The workshops covered topics such as budgeting, saving, and understanding the concept of halal (permissible) investments. The

counselors used real-life examples and Islamic principles to illustrate how financial literacy aligns with religious values. Participants were encouraged to share their financial challenges and seek advice from the counselors and each other. The outcome of this initiative was profound, as many participants reported feeling more confident in managing their finances. Additionally, the workshops fostered a sense of community, with participants expressing a desire to continue discussing financial matters and supporting one another in their financial journeys. This case underscores the importance of adapting counseling practices to address the specific needs and challenges faced by the community.

Islamic religious counselors also play a vital role in addressing broader social issues through their counseling practices. For example, a series of counseling sessions focused on the issue of domestic violence was organized in response to a rise in reported cases within the community. The counselors aimed to create a safe environment for victims to share their experiences and seek support.

The sessions included discussions on the Islamic perspective on marriage, family, and the importance of mutual respect and kindness. Counselors provided resources and support for individuals affected by domestic violence, including information on legal rights and access to shelters. By addressing the root causes of domestic violence through an Islamic lens, the counselors helped participants understand the need for change and empowerment.

Feedback from participants indicated that they felt more empowered to seek help and advocate for themselves and others in similar situations. Additionally, the counselors observed a decrease in reported cases of domestic violence in the community, indicating that their efforts were making a tangible impact. This example illustrates the significant role that Islamic religious counseling can play in addressing social issues and promoting positive change within the community.

The diverse counseling practices employed by Islamic religious counselors in Samudera Sub-District, North Aceh, demonstrate their commitment to fostering religious awareness and addressing the various challenges faced by community members. Through individual counseling,

group discussions, public lectures, thematic sessions, family counseling, community outreach programs, and initiatives addressing social issues, counselors are making a meaningful impact on the lives of residents.

These case studies highlight the importance of adapting counseling methods to the specific needs of the community, as well as the role of Islamic teachings in guiding these practices. As the community continues to navigate the complexities of life, the contributions of Islamic religious counselors will remain essential in promoting understanding, resilience, and growth among the residents of Samudera Sub-District

Impact of Counseling on Religious Knowledge and Practice Among Residents Assessing Changes in Religious Knowledge

Religious knowledge forms the foundation of a community's spiritual and moral compass, shaping their understanding of faith, practices, and societal values. Assessing changes in religious knowledge within a community like Samudera Sub-District in North Aceh is crucial to evaluate the efficacy of Islamic religious counseling programs and their impact on fostering a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings. This section delves into the methods used to measure religious knowledge, offering a comprehensive exploration of surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, and other techniques employed by researchers and counselors to gauge the progress and challenges in promoting religious awareness.

To assess changes in religious knowledge, Islamic religious counselors and researchers often rely on a variety of methodological approaches. These methods aim to capture both qualitative and quantitative data, enabling a holistic understanding of how religious awareness evolves within the community. Surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions are among the most commonly used techniques in this context.

Surveys are a widely utilized tool for measuring religious knowledge, as they provide an efficient means of gathering data from a large population. These surveys typically include structured questionnaires designed to assess respondents' understanding of Islamic principles, rituals, and moral values. Questions may cover topics such as the Five Pillars of Islam, the significance of prayer and fasting, and the importance of zakat (charitable

giving) in fostering social harmony.

For instance, a study conducted by Riza and Mulasi (2024) highlights the use of surveys to examine the level of religious understanding among residents in Aceh. The researchers designed their questionnaire to evaluate knowledge of Islamic teachings and the extent to which individuals integrate these teachings into their daily lives. By analyzing the responses, they were able to identify gaps in knowledge and tailor counseling programs to address specific areas of concern.

Moreover, surveys can be adapted to different demographics within the community, such as youth, adults, and the elderly. This flexibility allows counselors to identify the unique challenges faced by each group and develop targeted interventions. However, it is essential to ensure that the survey questions are culturally sensitive and aligned with the community's religious context to yield accurate and meaningful results.

Interviews provide a more in-depth approach to understanding changes in religious knowledge. Unlike surveys, which focus on standardized questions, interviews allow researchers and counselors to engage participants in open-ended conversations about their beliefs, experiences, and perceptions of Islamic teachings. This method is particularly effective in uncovering nuanced insights that may not emerge through structured questionnaires.

As noted by OK, Arsyad, and Amri (2024), interviews with community members in Samudera Sub-District revealed valuable information about the role of Islamic religious counselors in promoting religious awareness. Participants shared their experiences of attending counseling sessions and how these interactions deepened their understanding of Islamic principles. The researchers emphasized the importance of building trust and rapport with interviewees to create a safe space for honest and meaningful dialogue.

Interviews can be conducted on a one-on-one basis or in small groups, depending on the research objectives and the participants' preferences. For example, religious counselors in North Aceh may organize interviews with parents to understand their challenges in instilling Islamic values in their children. Similarly, discussions with youth can provide insights into their perceptions of religion and the factors influencing their spiritual growth.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) are another valuable method for assessing changes in religious knowledge. By bringing together a diverse group of participants, FGDs facilitate collective reflection on religious teachings and practices. This approach encourages dialogue, fosters mutual understanding, and allows participants to learn from each other's experiences.

Hapsari, Rahman, and Alim (2023) emphasize the effectiveness of FGDs in their study on counseling programs at Islamic boarding schools. The researchers found that group discussions provided an opportunity for participants to share their perspectives on religious topics, such as the importance of prayer and the challenges of maintaining Islamic values in a rapidly changing society. Through these discussions, counselors were able to identify common misconceptions and address them through targeted guidance.

In the context of Samudera Sub-District, FGDs can be organized within local mosques, community centers, or schools. For instance, Islamic religious counselors may facilitate discussions among women to explore their understanding of Islamic teachings on family and gender roles. Similarly, youth groups can engage in conversations about the relevance of Islamic values in modern life, fostering a sense of collective responsibility for preserving religious traditions.

In addition to traditional methods, modern technology and creative approaches can enhance the assessment of religious knowledge. For example, online surveys and digital platforms enable researchers to reach a broader audience and collect data more efficiently. Interactive quizzes and educational apps can also be used to evaluate participants' understanding of Islamic teachings in an engaging and interactive manner.

(Rizqi Wahyudi, Andi M Faisal Bakti, Arief Subhan, 2024) highlight the potential of integrating narratives, tables, and charts into counseling programs to facilitate understanding and analysis. These visual tools can be used to present complex religious concepts in a simplified and accessible format, making it easier for participants to grasp and retain the information.

Furthermore, creative approaches such as role-playing, storytelling, and multimedia presentations can be incorporated into counseling sessions to

reinforce religious knowledge. For example, counselors in Samudera Sub-District may use role-playing exercises to demonstrate the practical application of Islamic values in everyday situations. Storytelling sessions can also be organized to share inspiring narratives from Islamic history, fostering a deeper connection with the faith.

To measure changes in religious knowledge effectively, it is essential to establish clear indicators that reflect the community's understanding of Islamic teachings. These indicators can be categorized into three main areas: foundational knowledge, practical application, and spiritual awareness.

1. **Foundational Knowledge:** This includes participants' understanding of core Islamic principles, such as the Five Pillars of Islam, the Quran, and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Surveys and quizzes can be used to assess participants' knowledge of these foundational concepts.
2. **Practical Application:** This refers to the extent to which individuals integrate Islamic teachings into their daily lives. For example, researchers may evaluate participants' adherence to religious practices such as prayer, fasting, and charity. Interviews and FGDs can provide insights into the challenges faced by community members in maintaining these practices.
3. **Spiritual Awareness:** This encompasses participants' ability to reflect on the deeper meanings of Islamic teachings and their relevance to personal growth and societal harmony. Creative approaches such as storytelling and role-playing can be used to assess participants' spiritual awareness and their capacity for critical thinking.

While the methods outlined above offer valuable insights into changes in religious knowledge, they also come with challenges that must be addressed to ensure accurate and meaningful results.

One of the primary challenges is the potential for social desirability bias, where participants may provide responses that they believe are socially acceptable rather than reflecting their true beliefs and practices. To mitigate this issue, researchers and counselors must create a safe and non-judgmental environment for data collection.

Another challenge is the diversity of religious knowledge within the

community. As noted by Anggraini and Alhudry (2024), North Aceh is home to a majority Muslim population with varying levels of religious understanding. This diversity requires researchers to develop culturally sensitive and contextually relevant assessment tools that cater to the unique needs of each subgroup.

Finally, the dynamic nature of religious knowledge poses a challenge for longitudinal studies. As participants continue to engage in counseling programs and deepen their understanding of Islamic teachings, their knowledge and perceptions may evolve over time. Researchers must account for these changes and adapt their assessment methods accordingly

Conclusion

Social and Behavioral Outcomes

Islamic religious counselors play an essential role in addressing and mitigating social issues that challenge the moral fabric and harmony of communities. Among the most pressing social problems in Samudera Sub-District, North Aceh, are drug abuse, domestic violence, and juvenile delinquency. These issues, if left unaddressed, can lead to the erosion of societal values, disrupt family structures, and hinder community development. Islamic religious counseling emerges as a vital intervention, providing spiritual, emotional, and moral guidance to individuals and families who face such challenges. This section discusses how Islamic religious counseling contributes to reducing social problems by fostering a sense of responsibility, enhancing religious understanding, and encouraging positive behavioral changes within the community.

Drug abuse is a growing concern in many communities, including Samudera Sub-District. It not only affects the individuals involved but also has far-reaching consequences for families and society at large. Islamic religious counselors address this issue by instilling a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings, which emphasize the importance of maintaining physical and spiritual purity. According to AH OK, J Arsyad, and K Amri (2024), religious instructors play a pivotal role in fostering moderation and discipline in individuals' lives. By incorporating Islamic values into their counseling practices, counselors encourage individuals to abstain from

harmful substances and adopt healthier lifestyles.

One effective approach employed by counselors is the use of Quranic verses and Hadiths to highlight the detrimental effects of drug abuse on one's health, family, and faith. For instance, the Quran explicitly forbids intoxicants, stating, "O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilem

Challenges and Opportunities for Islamic Religious Counselors

The role of Islamic religious counselors in fostering religious awareness and addressing socio-religious issues within communities is deeply significant. However, like any profession, it is not without its challenges. In the context of Samudera Sub-District, North Aceh, a region rich in Islamic heritage but also grappling with the complexities of post-conflict recovery, the responsibilities of religious counselors are both demanding and vital. This section delves into the obstacles encountered by these counselors and explores the opportunities available to enhance their effectiveness and expand their reach within the community. By identifying these challenges and opportunities, we aim to highlight potential strategies to ensure that Islamic religious counseling continues to play a transformative role in society.

Islamic religious counselors in Samudera Sub-District face a range of challenges, some of which stem from structural issues, while others are rooted in cultural and societal dynamics. These challenges can be broadly categorized into logistical, cultural, and professional obstacles.

One of the key challenges for Islamic religious counselors in Samudera Sub-District is the issue of accessibility, particularly in rural or remote areas. The sub-district comprises a mix of urban and rural communities, with some villages located in isolated regions where transportation infrastructure is limited. Counselors often struggle to reach these areas due to the lack of reliable transportation, which hampers their ability to consistently deliver guidance and support to all members of the community. As Aliani, Alam, Rofiq, and Srinio (2023) emphasize, transportation and distance are common barriers that limit the effectiveness

of religious counseling initiatives, particularly in regions with inadequate infrastructure.

In addition to physical accessibility, the availability of electronic media to bridge the gap is another concern. While technology has the potential to revolutionize counseling practices, many communities in Samudera Sub-District lack access to reliable internet or electronic communication tools. This digital divide creates a significant challenge for counselors attempting to use modern methods to reach wider audiences.

Cultural barriers also play a significant role in hindering the effectiveness of religious counseling. Samudera Sub-District is characterized by its strong adherence to Acehese traditions and Islamic values. While this cultural identity is a source of strength, it can also create resistance to new approaches in counseling. For example, traditional perspectives on gender roles may limit the participation of women in counseling sessions, either as counselors or as recipients of guidance. As noted by Ni'mah, Susanti, and Firman (2023), bridging cultural gaps and fostering unity in diverse communities requires a nuanced understanding of local traditions and sensitivities, which can be challenging for counselors.

Furthermore, societal issues such as stigma around seeking help and discussing personal problems openly can discourage individuals from engaging with religious counselors. This is particularly true in cases involving sensitive topics like domestic violence, drug abuse, or mental health issues. Rassool (2015) highlights the importance of fostering communication and trust between religious leaders and community members to overcome such barriers. However, achieving this level of trust requires sustained effort and cultural sensitivity.

The effectiveness of Islamic religious counselors is also limited by professional challenges, including a lack of comprehensive training and insufficient resources. Many counselors in Samudera Sub-District operate with minimal support from formal institutions, which restricts their ability to access advanced training opportunities or collaborate with other professionals. (Mulyani et al., 2022) underscore the importance of interdisciplinary knowledge for religious educators and counselors, as it enables them to address complex issues more effectively. However, without

adequate training programs and institutional backing, counselors may struggle to develop the skills needed to navigate these challenges.

Resource constraints are another critical issue. Limited funding for counseling initiatives often results in inadequate facilities, materials, and logistical support. This lack of resources not only affects the quality of counseling services but also places additional stress on counselors, who must often operate under challenging conditions. For instance, Sholeh, Haris, and Shobirin (2024) highlight the need for collaboration between various stakeholders, including schools, parents, and psychologists, to address resource limitations and enhance the overall impact of counseling efforts.

Despite these challenges, there are numerous opportunities to strengthen the role of Islamic religious counselors in Samudera Sub-District. By leveraging existing resources, fostering collaboration, and adopting innovative approaches, counselors can overcome many of the obstacles they face and expand their reach within the community.

One of the most effective ways to enhance the impact of religious counseling is by fostering collaboration between counselors, community leaders, and other stakeholders. Community support is a powerful resource that can help counselors gain access to remote areas, build trust with residents, and address cultural barriers. For example, partnering with local mosques, schools, and community organizations can provide counselors with platforms to reach larger audiences and deliver their messages more effectively.

In addition to local collaboration, establishing partnerships with regional and national institutions can provide counselors with access to training programs, funding opportunities, and professional networks. As (Saputri et al., n.d.) suggest, understanding Islamic teachings on *wasatiyyah*, or the middle way, is crucial for fostering balanced and inclusive counseling practices. By participating in workshops and seminars organized by religious and academic institutions, counselors can deepen their understanding of such principles and apply them in their work.

While the digital divide remains a challenge in some parts of Samudera Sub-District, there is significant potential for technology to play a

transformative role in religious counseling. Social media platforms, video conferencing tools, and mobile applications can be used to deliver counseling services to individuals who may not be able to attend in-person sessions. For example, counselors can create educational videos, host live discussions, or share religious teachings through online platforms to reach a broader audience.

Moreover, technology can facilitate the development of virtual support networks, where community members can connect with each other and with counselors to share experiences, seek guidance, and provide mutual support. As noted by (Partiwi, n.d.) fostering trust and openness is a key aspect of effective counseling, and technology can serve as a valuable tool in achieving this goal.

Investing in the professional development of Islamic religious counselors is essential for addressing the challenges they face and improving the quality of their services. Comprehensive training programs that cover topics such as conflict resolution, mental health awareness, and effective communication techniques can equip counselors with the skills they need to navigate complex issues within the community. As (Asnan & Fattahillah, n.d.) highlights, fostering tolerance and understanding is a critical aspect of religious education, and counselors must be trained to promote these values effectively.

In addition to formal training programs, creating opportunities for peer learning and mentorship can also enhance professional development. Experienced counselors can share their knowledge and insights with newer practitioners, providing them with guidance and support as they navigate the challenges of their work. Such initiatives can help build a strong network of skilled and dedicated counselors who are well-equipped to serve their communities.

Another important opportunity for improving the effectiveness of Islamic religious counseling in Samudera Sub-District is promoting awareness and reducing stigma around seeking help. Public education campaigns that emphasize the importance of counseling and highlight its benefits can encourage more individuals to engage with counselors and seek guidance for their problems. These campaigns can be conducted through

community events, mosque sermons, and social media platforms, ensuring that the message reaches a wide audience.

Furthermore, counselors can work to create safe and supportive environments where individuals feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues without fear of judgment or discrimination. As (Goa, n.d.) points out, fostering trust and open communication is essential for addressing societal issues and promoting positive behavioral change. By building strong relationships with community members and demonstrating empathy and understanding, counselors can help reduce the stigma associated with seeking help and encourage greater participation in counseling initiatives.

Islamic religious counselors in Samudera Sub-District play a vital role in fostering religious awareness and addressing societal challenges. However, they face a range of obstacles, including logistical, cultural, and professional challenges, that limit their effectiveness and reach. By leveraging community support, utilizing technology, enhancing training opportunities, and promoting awareness, counselors can overcome these challenges and continue to make a meaningful impact on the lives of the residents in Samudera Sub-District.

Through collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to continuous improvement, Islamic religious counselors can expand their role as agents of positive change, helping to build a more cohesive, informed, and spiritually aware community. As the challenges and opportunities discussed in this section illustrate, the path forward requires a collective effort from counselors, community members, and institutions to ensure that religious counseling remains a powerful force for good in Samudera Sub-District and beyond.

Bibliography

- Abdul Azis Perangin Angin, Farihin Alfattah, Imamul Safi'I, M. S. (2025). Pengaruh Mata Kuliah Public Speaking Terhadap Kemampuan Mahasiswa Berbicara Di Depan Umum. *Jurnal Edukasi Dan Literasi Pendidikan*, 6(1), 181–189.
- Amin, H. M. M. (n.d.). *Dakwah Islam Dan Pesan Moral*, Cet. al-Amin Press.
- Anggito, A., & Setiawan, J. (n.d.). *No Title* (M. P. Kualitatif (Ed.)).
- Asnan, K. M., & Fattahillah, A. (n.d.). Hak Perempuan Dan Kesetaraan Gender Menurut Perspektif Nawal El-Sa'Dawi. *Jurnal Equalita*, 4(1), 41–58.
- Eligur, B. (n.d.). *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey*. Cambridge University Press.
- Eriyanto. (n.d.). *Analisi Isi Pengantar Metodologi Untuk Penelitian Ilmu Komunikasi dan Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Lainnya*. Prenadamedia Group.
- Fitri, A. zaenul, & Haryanti, N. (2020). Metode Penelitian Pendidikan kuantitatif, kualitatif dan Reasarch and Development. *Madani Media*, 115.
- Goa, L. (n.d.). Perubahan Sosial Dalam Kehidupan Bermasyarakat. *SAPA - Jurnal Kateketik Dan Pastoral*, 2(2), 53–67.
- Hasan, N. (n.d.). Islamist Party, Electoral Politics and Da'wah Mobilization Among Youth: The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 6(1), 17–47.
- Hasibuan, M. (n.d.). *Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia (keempat be*. Bumi Aksara.
- Kamruzzaman. (2024). Urgensi Ulama HUDA Dalam Refleksi Komunikasi. *Liwaul Dakwah: Jurnal Kajian Dakwah Dan Masyarakat Islam*, 14(1), 2024. <https://journal.iainlhokseumawe.ac.id/index.php/liwauldakwah/article/view/2755/1291>
- Kholil, S. (n.d.). *Metode Penelitian Komunikasi*. Cita Pustaka Media.
- Mulyani, S. R., Muis, S. F., & Rahmawati, R. (2022). Strategi Komunikasi Verbal Dan Nonverbal Dalam Meningkatkan Skill Public Speaking Santri Smk Life Skill Kendari. *Meyarsa: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Dakwah*, 3(1), 9–23.

- Nurmala, Nurhasanah, Nadrah Sitorus, Oknita, Kamaruzzaman, Ismuhar, Muhammad Saleh, M. (2025). Sosialisasi Peran Artificial Intelligence (AI) dalam Proses Pembelajaran di Era Digital. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Dan Riset Pendidikan*, 4(1), 2178–2183. <https://jerkn.org/index.php/jerkn/article/view/1917/1435>
- Partiwi, S. U. (n.d.). Sosiologi X. *Paper Knowledge . Toward a Media History of Documents*, 12–26.
- Rachman, M. A. (2018). Kecenderungan Baru Peran Arsiparis Kajian Di Kantor Arsip Universitas Indonesia. *Jurnal Kearsipan*, 13(2), 121–138.
- Restiviani, Y. (2023). PROSES PEMBENTUKAN SALING PENGERTIAN PADA JIWA KOMUNIKATOR DALAM KOMUNIKASI ISLAM. *Enlekturer*, 1(1), 37–52. <https://journal.enliinstitute.com/index.php/ENLEKTURER%0APROSES>
- Rizqi Wahyudi, Andi M Faisal Bakti, Arief Subhan, Y. D. (2024). Hasan Tiro of Aceh and His Social History: A Study of Political Communication Hasan Tiro of Aceh and His Social History : A Study of Political Communication and Propaganda. *JURNAL INDO-ISLAMIKA*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.15408/jii.v14i2.42245>
- Saleh, Muhammad, T. Faizin, K. (2024). ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNICATION PATTERNS OF VILLAGE HEADS IN IMPROVING THE STATUS FROM HIGHLY UNDERDEVELOPED VILLAGE TO LESS DEVELOPED VILLAGE. *Jurnal Network Media*, 4(1), 2569–6446.
- Saputri, D. A., Lestari, N. B., & Firinanda, R. (n.d.). Representasi Image Anak Muda Dalam Budaya Ngopi. *Tuturan: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi, Sosial Dan Humaniora* 1, 2, 122–135.
- Specia, M. (n.d.). Who Are Sufi Muslims and Why Do Some Extremists Hate Them? *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/24/world/middlee>
- Syarifudin. Administrasi Pembiayaan Pendidikan. (Bandung : Pustaka. (n.d.). *Setia*, 14.
- Taufiq, S., & Nuraskin, C. A. (n.d.). Implementation Of Health Promotion Strategies In Integrated Field Work Lectures For North Aceh Nursing

The Role of Islamic Religious Counselors in Fostering Religious Awareness in Samudera Sub-District North Aceh

Study Program Students Health Polytechnic Ministry Of Health, Aceh.
AICH: Aceh International Conference on Health, 1(1)).