



Community-Based Islamic Religious Guidance: Counselor Performance and Decentralized Operation in Minority Contexts

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Abstract:

Community-based Islamic religious guidance is important for strengthening religious understanding and sustaining religious activities, particularly when counselors face limitations in time, coverage, and availability. This study aims to examine the roles and performance of Islamic religious counselors in implementing community-based religious guidance, identify the forms of guidance activities, and analyze supporting and inhibiting factors. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving Islamic religious counselors, Islamic community guidance officials, mosque administrators, community leaders, and community members selected purposively. Data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and verification. The findings show that counselors act as facilitators, mediators, motivators, and community mobilizers. Religious guidance is implemented through *majelis Taklim*, *perwiritan* groups, mosque youth, and community-based social organizations as spaces for religious learning and participation. Implementation is supported by religious and community leaders, mosque administrators, and residents but constrained by limited community time, geographical conditions, and the limited number of counselors. Community-based counselor performance strengthens participation and supports the continuity of Islamic religious activities. Shared responsibility between counselors and community organizations is essential for sustainable and decentralized religious guidance.

INTRODUCTION

Religious guidance is important for helping communities understand and practice religious values within changing social conditions. Its importance becomes greater in communities characterized by social diversity, unequal access, and different opportunities for religious development. Community-based religious education can connect religious learning with everyday relationships, collective activities, and local responsibilities, making religious development a shared social process rather than an individual activity. Recent studies demonstrate that community-based Islamic education can strengthen participation, social interaction, and practical religious engagement within local communities (Irama & Herawati, 2026; Putra et al., 2025). This approach is particularly relevant for Muslim communities living as minorities, where religious activities may depend strongly on local networks and community institutions. Studies of Muslim communities in minority contexts also highlight the importance of adapting

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religious education and guidance to specific socio-cultural conditions (Hasanah et al., 2025; Masri et al., 2025). Therefore, examining how Islamic religious guidance is organized and sustained is important for understanding community participation, religious learning, and social cohesion.

Despite its importance, religious guidance in minority communities may face limitations in access, continuity, human resources, and geographical reach. Religious counselors may be required to serve communities with different social conditions, while residents may have limited time because of occupational responsibilities and may live in geographically dispersed areas. Such circumstances can make regular face-to-face guidance difficult and reduce opportunities for sustained religious interaction. Research on Muslim minority communities has similarly identified the need for contextual adaptation in responding to specific social and religious challenges (Hasanah et al., 2025; Masri et al., 2025). The problem is therefore not simply whether religious activities exist, but how guidance can remain accessible, participatory, and continuous under these conditions. A community-based approach offers a possible response because it can involve existing religious and social groups in organizing activities. However, the roles of counselors, community organizations, and residents need to be examined together to understand how shared participation can sustain religious guidance across diverse local settings.

This situation is visible in Simalungun Regency, where Muslim communities live as minorities within a socially diverse regional setting. Field conditions show that Islamic religious guidance is implemented through community spaces such as majelis *Taklim*, perwiritan groups, mosque youth organizations, and Karang Taruna. Religious counselors coordinate with mosque administrators, community leaders, youth groups, and residents in organizing religious learning, Qur'anic activities, religious discussions, collective worship, and social programs. This pattern corresponds with recent research showing that community-based Islamic education can strengthen participatory religious engagement and practical community involvement (Irama & Herawati, 2026; Putra et al., 2025). The findings also indicate that counselors do not always remain physically present during every activity because communities are geographically dispersed and counselors serve multiple areas. Community members therefore assume practical responsibilities, including scheduling activities, coordinating participants, preparing venues, and supporting social programs. These conditions provide an empirical setting for examining how counselor performance and community participation interact in sustaining Islamic religious guidance in everyday community life.

Previous studies have generally discussed Islamic religious guidance in relation to religious development, community participation, religious education, youth engagement, and social empowerment. Recent research indicates that community-based Islamic education can promote participation and practical engagement (Putra et al., 2025), while Islamic value-based community empowerment can connect da'wah and religious education with local participation (Irama & Herawati, 2026). Research on Muslim youth also demonstrates the importance of mosque-based organizations in developing youth leadership and participation (Sunatar & Yusof, 2025). Other studies emphasize cultural and religious empowerment as a means of strengthening social cohesion within local communities (Susilo & Syahputra, 2026). However, much of this literature examines religious education, community empowerment, youth participation, or social cohesion as relatively distinct dimensions. Less attention has been given to how these elements operate together with the work of professional religious counselors within Muslim-

minority communities. This gap is important because continuity of religious guidance may depend on relationships between counselors and community-based institutions rather than on counselor activities alone.

The existing literature also leaves a contextual gap concerning how counselor performance is maintained when religious guidance must operate across geographically dispersed minority communities. Studies of minority Muslim communities emphasize the importance of contextual adaptation to local social and cultural conditions (Hasanah et al., 2025; Masri et al., 2025), while research on community empowerment demonstrates the importance of participation and local involvement in sustaining community initiatives (Irama & Herawati, 2026; Susilo & Syahputra, 2026). Nevertheless, these studies do not fully explain how communities share operational responsibilities with religious counselors in maintaining recurring religious activities. The present study addresses this gap by examining the practical relationship between counselor roles and community structures in Simalungun Regency. Particular attention is given to counselors as mediators, facilitators, and motivators, while majelis *Taklim*, perwiran groups, mosque youth, and Karang Taruna are examined as active community partners. This perspective moves the analysis from individual counselor performance toward a relational understanding of religious guidance and clarifies how organizational cooperation responds to minority community conditions.

The state of the art of this study lies in conceptualizing community-based Islamic religious guidance as a shared operational system rather than a service delivered primarily by religious counselors. Existing studies have established the value of community-based education, empowerment, youth participation, and contextual religious adaptation. However, they have not sufficiently connected these dimensions to the operational roles of counselors in geographically dispersed Muslim-minority communities. The present study advances this perspective by showing how counselors connect, facilitate, motivate, and coordinate existing community structures, while community members assume practical responsibilities for continuing religious activities. The novelty therefore lies not merely in examining Islamic guidance in Simalungun, but in identifying a decentralized mechanism through which counselor facilitation and community ownership jointly sustain religious activities despite limited counselor availability. This perspective provides a new understanding of counselor performance in which continuity is achieved through participation, coordination, and shared responsibility.

This study addresses the problem of how Islamic religious guidance can be sustained in Muslim-minority communities when counselors face limited coverage, geographical distance, and community time constraints. It argues that counselor performance can be strengthened when religious guidance is organized through shared responsibilities with community institutions and local actors. The research therefore examines how counselors implement community-based guidance, how they perform their roles as mediators, facilitators, and motivators, and how communities participate in maintaining religious activities. It also examines supporting and inhibiting conditions that shape implementation. The study contributes an empirical explanation of how professional religious guidance and community capacity can operate together within a minority context. Its central argument is that continuity does not require counselors to be physically present in every activity; rather, continuity can emerge when counselors successfully build coordination, participation, and local ownership within existing community structures. In this way, the study contributes to the development of a more decentralized and sustainable model of Islamic religious guidance.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design to explore the implementation of community-based Islamic religious guidance in Muslim-minority communities in Simalungun Regency. A qualitative descriptive approach was selected to provide a comprehensive account of processes, interactions, experiences, and roles within their natural social context (Stanley, 2023; Villamin et al., 2025). The case study design enabled an in-depth examination of how Islamic religious guidance was organized through community institutions and how religious counselors performed their roles (Miller et al., 2023; Viera, 2023). The study examined majelis *Taklim*, perwiritan groups, mosque youth, and Karang Taruna, as well as counselors' roles as mediators, facilitators, and motivators.

The research was conducted in Muslim-minority communities in Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. These methods provided complementary evidence for understanding the phenomenon from different perspectives (Chand, 2025). Observation focused on Islamic study sessions, majelis *Taklim*, perwiritan, Qur'anic learning, religious discussions, youth activities, and social programs. Participant observation enabled examination of activities within their natural setting (Da Costa et al., 2024; Elhamma, 2024). Interviews involved religious counselors, mosque administrators, community and religious leaders, youth representatives, and active Muslim residents. Informants were selected purposively based on their involvement, experience, and knowledge of the activities examined (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024; Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). Documentation included activity records, schedules, organizational information, and relevant field documents.

Data were analyzed through an interactive process consisting of data condensation, data display, and data verification. Data condensation involved selecting, organizing, and focusing information relevant to community-based religious guidance, counselor roles, community participation, and supporting and inhibiting factors. The condensed data were displayed thematically to identify patterns concerning community activities, counselor–community coordination, shared responsibilities, youth participation, and program continuity. Data verification involved repeatedly examining information from observations, interviews, and documentation and comparing accounts across informants. This systematic process is consistent with qualitative case study approaches emphasizing organized data management and cross-source examination (Alam, 2021; Miller et al., 2023). The analysis ultimately established a coherent description of how community-based Islamic religious guidance operates and how counselors and community members contribute to its continuity in Simalungun's Muslim-minority context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Implementation of Community-Based Islamic Religious Guidance

Based on the results of interviews with the Head of Islamic Religious Extension Officers, religious extension workers, administrators of the Mosque Prosperity Agency (BKM), community leaders, administrators, and the Muslim community, the implementation of Islamic religious guidance in the minority area of Simalungun Regency is carried out through various community groups. The communities involved in these activities include the *Taklim* council, the officer group, mosque youth, and the youth of

Karang Taruna. Guidance activities are carried out in the form of recitations, religious lectures, Qur'an learning, social activities, commemorations of Islamic holidays, and other community activities. The implementation of activities involves religious extension workers, community administrators, mosque administrators, community leaders, and Muslim communities, in accordance with the form of activities carried out.

Table 1. Implementation of Community-Based Islamic Religious Guidance

Community	Form of Activity	Involvement in Mentorship
<i>Taklim</i> Assembly	Routine study, religious talks, Qur'an learning, family building	Participating in and carrying out religious learning activities regularly
Officers	Wirid, joint prayer, Islamic studies, religious discussions	Carry out religious activities and coordinate member activities
Mosque Youth	Recitation, learning the Qur'an, commemoration of Islamic holidays, da'wah activities	Involved in religious activities and mosque committees
Karang Taruna	Social activities, Friday Blessings, compensation, community assistance	Involved in social and religious activities in the community

***Taklim* Council as Religious Guidance**

The results of the interviews show that the *Taklim* council is one of the communities used in the implementation of community religious guidance. Activities carried out through the *Taklim* council include routine recitation, religious lectures, learning the Qur'an, and fostering the sakinah family. Mr. AW, as the Head of Islamic Religious Extension of Simalungun Regency, explained that religious extension workers provide guidance to the *Taklim* council through religious activities carried out with the community. The activity is carried out on a scheduled basis by involving members of the *Taklim* council as participants and administrators of the activity.

In the implementation of activities, religious extension workers provide materials, directions, and assistance to members of the *Taklim* council. The management of the *Taklim* council helps to arrange the schedule, place, and participants of the activities to be carried out. The community that is a member of the *Taklim* council is also involved in preparing the needs of the activities and following the material presented. Religious recitation and learning activities are carried out according to the schedule that has been determined by the management and members.

Wiritan Group as a Means of Strengthening the Religious Community

The results of the interview showed that the wiritit's group is one of the communities that routinely carry out religious activities. The wiritit's activities include the reading of verses of the Qur'an, dhikr, prayer together, Islamic studies, religious discussions, and moral development. Mrs. RL, as a member of the wiritit, explained that the activity was carried out regularly according to the schedule that had been agreed upon by the members. In addition to religious activities, the wiritit's members also carried out joint activities related to social relations between community members.

Mr. PB, as the BKM administrator, explained that religious extension workers provide directions to the management and members of the community group in the implementation of activities. The directions are related to activity materials, implementation schedules, and the involvement of community members. The community group then carries out activities according to the set schedule. Community members take turns hosting the place, inviting members, and arranging the needs of the activity.

The results of the interviews showed that worship activities were still carried out when religious extension workers were not present in person at each meeting. The management and group members carried out activities based on the schedule and division of tasks that had been agreed. Wirid activities, recitations, and joint prayers were still carried out by members on a regular basis. In addition, the wirid group was also involved in social activities such as sharing food and helping people in need.

Mosque Youth as a Vehicle for the Development of the Young Generation of Islam

The results of the study show that mosque youth are involved in various religious activities carried out in the mosque environment. These activities include routine recitation, Qur'an learning, leadership training, commemoration of Islamic holidays, da'wah activities, and socio-religious activities. Mr. AW, as the Head of Islamic Religious Extension of Simalungun Regency, explained that extension workers provide guidance to adolescents through activities carried out with mosque youth. Coaching is carried out by providing directions before activities and assistance in certain activities.

The results of the interviews showed that mosque youth were involved in Qur'an learning activities for children in the environment around the mosque. These activities included learning to read and write the Qur'an, memorizing short letters, and delivering material on morals. Mosque youth helped prepare activities and accompanied the children during the learning process. The activity was carried out at a time that had been determined by the management and members of the mosque youth.

Mosque youth are also involved in the implementation of the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday, Islamic New Year, Isra Mi'raj, and other religious activities. The involvement of youth is carried out through committees, venue preparation, information dissemination, and the implementation of activities. Some members of the mosque youth also help with da'wah activities and social activities carried out with the community. The implementation of activities is carried out in coordination between mosque youth, mosque administrators, religious extension workers, and the community.

Youth of Karang Taruna as a Partner in Socio-Religious Development

The results of the interviews showed that Karang Taruna youth were involved in social and religious activities carried out in the community. These activities included commemoration of Islamic holidays, fundraising, social assistance, Friday Blessings, and assistance to people who experienced disasters. Religious extension workers gave directions to the youth before the activities were carried out. The directions were related to the form of activities, the division of duties, and the involvement of youth in community activities.

Based on interviews with several youth of Karang Taruna, social activities are carried out in collaboration with mosque administrators, community leaders, and religious groups. Youth are involved in raising funds for people who have experienced disasters and families who need help. Youth are also involved in Blessing Friday activities through the distribution of food to the community. In addition, youth participate in distributing aid to people affected by disasters.

The results of the interviews showed that Karang Taruna activities were not only carried out in certain religious activities, but also in community social activities. Youth assisted in the preparation, implementation, and completion of activities in accordance with the division of duties. Religious extension workers provided direction to activities

related to religious values and social concerns. Activities were carried out through coordination between Karang Taruna youth, religious extension workers, mosque administrators, and the community.

Extension Workers' Guidance to Minorities

The results of the study show that religious extension workers carry out religious guidance through coordination with mosque administrators, community leaders, civil servant groups, mosque youth, youth organizations, and the Muslim community. Based on the results of the interviews, there are several forms of extension activities in the implementation of religious guidance. These activities include coordination with the community, providing direction, assistance with activities, and providing motivation to the community. Extension activities are carried out through direct meetings and through communication with community administrators.

Extension Worker Performance as a Mediator and Community Mobilizer

The results of the interview with Mr. PB, the BKM administrator, showed that religious development activities generally began with coordination between religious extension workers and mosque administrators. Information about the schedule of recitations, lectures, Qur'an coaching, and other religious activities was submitted in advance to the mosque administrators. The mosque administrators then forwarded the information to the fathers' administrators, women's administrators, mosque youths, and mosque worshippers. The information conveyed included the time, place, form of activity, and parties involved in the activities.

Mr. AW, as the Head of Islamic Religious Extension of Simalungun Regency, explained that there are 61 Islamic religious extension workers spread across various sub-districts. Religious extension workers carry out coaching in accordance with the region and community groups that are the target of the activity. In the implementation of activities, extension workers coordinate with mosque administrators and communities in the assisted areas. Coordination is carried out before the implementation of activities and, when necessary, during the implementation of certain activities.

The results of the interview with Mr. RS, a Muslim community leader, show that the scheduled religious activities are still carried out regularly. These activities include weekly recitations, mothers' and fathers' prayers, learning to read and write the Qur'an for children, mosque youth activities, and Friday Blessings. The community obtained information on activities through the mosque administrators and their respective group administrators. The implementation of activities was carried out according to the agreed schedule.

Mrs. RL, as a member of the committee, explained that community members took turns hosting the wiritit's activities. Members also helped prepare the place, coordinated the attendance of members, and provided the needs of the activity. The wiritit activities were carried out according to the schedule that had been determined by the group. In addition to the wiritit, community members were also involved in the Friday Blessing activities in the form of distributing food and assistance to people in need.

Performance of Extension Workers as Facilitators of Community Independence

The results of the study show that religious extension workers provide assistance and direction to the community in the implementation of religious activities. Assistance is carried out through communication with community administrators and the

community involved in activities. Extension workers provide information about activities, provide directions to administrators, and provide assistance with certain activities. The form of assistance is adjusted to the type of activity and the conditions of the community in the assisted area.

Based on interviews with Mr. RS as a Muslim community leader and Mrs. RL as a member of the committee, the community has carried out various religious activities that previously received guidance from religious extension workers. These activities include wiritit, recitation, learning the Qur'an for children, mosque youth activities, and Friday Blessings. Activities are carried out according to the schedule that has been determined by each group. Administrators and community members are involved in the preparation and implementation of activities.

The community is also involved in determining the place and time of the activity and coordinating the participants. In the writing activity, community members take turns hosting and helping to provide the needs of the activity. In social activities, the community collects food, funds, and other assistance according to needs. The division of tasks is carried out between community administrators, community members, and other parties involved in the activity.

Extension Worker Performance as a Motivator in Increasing Community Participation

The results of the interviews showed that religious extension workers provided instructions, directions, and encouragement to the community to participate in religious and social activities. Extension workers gave direct directions when visiting or participating in community activities. Some informants said that extension workers were often present in the community to provide guidance and convey information about religious activities. The meeting was also used to communicate with the community about the implementation of activities.

The role of extension workers in providing direction is also found in youth development activities. Before the activity begins, the extension workers provide an explanation of the purpose of the activity and the division of tasks to the youth. The extension workers also convey directions regarding the involvement of youth in community social activities. Youth then participate in activities in accordance with the tasks that have been given.

The results of interviews with the youth showed that they were involved in fundraising activities, assistance to the needy, Friday Blessings, and other social activities. The involvement of the youth was carried out through the preparation of activities, the collection of aid, the distribution of food, and the distribution of aid. The youth received directions from religious extension workers and activity administrators before the implementation of the activity. After receiving directions, the youth carried out their duties in accordance with the predetermined distribution.

Drivers and Barriers to Islamic Guidance

The results of the study show that the implementation of Islamic religious guidance in the minority area of Simalungun Regency involves various communities. The communities involved include *Taklim* councils, wiritit groups, mosque youth, Youth Organizations, and other socio-religious groups. These communities are involved in recitation activities, wiritit, Qur'an learning, commemoration of Islamic holidays, Friday Blessings, social compensation, and community activities. The implementation of

activities involves religious extension workers, mosque administrators, community leaders, community administrators, and the community.

Based on the results of the interviews, the support of religious leaders, community leaders, mosque administrators, and religious group administrators is part of the implementation of activities. Community leaders help coordinate the community in certain activities. Mosque administrators help provide venues, convey information, and arrange activity schedules. Religious group administrators help organize members and assign tasks in the implementation of activities.

The results of the interviews showed that recitation and writitation activities were carried out regularly in accordance with the schedule of each group. The development of the *Taklim* council was carried out through recitation, lectures, and learning the Qur'an. Blessing Friday activities were carried out through the distribution of food and assistance to the community. The commemoration of Islamic holidays was carried out by involving mosque administrators, mosque youth, youth of Karang Taruna, and the community.

In addition to these supporting factors, the results of the study also found several obstacles in the implementation of religious guidance. Some people have a livelihood as farmers, so the time to participate in religious activities is adjusted to work activities. This condition causes some people to not always be able to participate in activities at the same time. The activity schedule is then adjusted to the time conditions of the community and group agreements.

Another obstacle is related to the geographical condition of the assisted area. Based on the results of the interview, there are community areas that are quite far from the center of religious activities. This condition is one of the situations faced by extension workers in carrying out coaching activities in several areas. The implementation of activities is then carried out through coordination with the community and community administrators in their respective areas.

The results of the interviews showed that religious activities were still carried out in the midst of limited community time and the condition of the target area. The community management arranged the activity schedule based on the agreement of the members and the conditions of the community. The community also divided the tasks in the preparation and implementation of activities so that the activities could continue to be carried out. Activities that continued included recitation, instruction, learning the Qur'an, mosque youth activities, Friday Blessings, and other social religious activities.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Islamic religious guidance in the Muslim-minority areas of Simalungun is implemented through community-based structures rather than relying exclusively on religious counselors. Majelis *Taklim*, perwiritan groups, mosque youth, and Karang Taruna function as interconnected spaces for religious learning, social activities, and community participation. This finding is consistent with Machali et al. (2023), who demonstrate the importance of informal Islamic education for sustaining religious learning among minority Muslim communities, and Al-Hudawi et al. (2026), who emphasize community institutions as sources of minority resilience. Comparing these findings with the present study, however, reveals a more operational dimension: community-based guidance in Simalungun responds directly to the geographical dispersion of Muslims and the limited availability of counselors. Similarly, Widodo et al. (2026) show that community-based religious engagement can extend Islamic learning to vulnerable groups. The present findings extend this literature by demonstrating that

shared responsibility among counselors, mosque administrators, community leaders, youth groups, and residents constitutes an operational mechanism for sustaining religious guidance.

The role of majelis *Taklim* and perwiratan identified in this study is consistent with previous literature describing these groups as important spaces for Islamic learning, religious socialization, and interpersonal interaction. Elizabeth et al. (2026) demonstrate that majelis *Taklim* can function as an arena for religious dissemination and social interaction, while Latif (2026) highlights its contribution to religious identity formation and social cohesion. Husaini et al. (2024) similarly emphasize the role of da'i strategies in increasing learning interest and understanding within majelis *Taklim*. Comparing these studies with the present findings shows substantial similarities in the educational and social functions of recurring religious gatherings. Nevertheless, this study identifies an additional dimension in which majelis *Taklim* and perwiratan continue organizing activities when religious counselors are not physically present. Members rotate responsibilities, prepare venues, coordinate participants, and manage activities independently. Different from approaches that primarily position community groups as recipients of religious instruction, the present findings show that they simultaneously operate as learning spaces and locally managed organizational units within minority Muslim communities.

The findings concerning mosque youth and Karang Taruna also correspond with literature emphasizing youth participation in religious and social development. Jati et al. (2024) demonstrate that Muslim youth can contribute to grassroots religious moderation and interfaith dialogue, while Wahid and Wardatun (2023) show that Muslim youth groups can develop peer-based forms of intellectual and religious engagement. Comparing these findings with the present study indicates that youth participation similarly extends beyond passive religious learning. Mosque youth participate in Qur'anic learning, Islamic commemorations, preaching activities, and mosque programs, while Karang Taruna members participate in fundraising, Friday charity programs, social assistance, and disaster-related support. However, compared with studies focusing mainly on youth religious engagement or intellectual activities, the present study reveals collaboration between mosque-based organizations and a broader community youth organization. This interaction expands religious guidance from the mosque into wider social activities. The contribution lies in demonstrating how religious values are communicated through practical social responsibilities, particularly among young people who may not regularly participate in formal mosque-based learning.

Another important finding concerns the counselor's role as mediator and community mobilizer. The counselors do not merely deliver religious materials but coordinate activities with mosque administrators, community leaders, and community organizations before activities are implemented. This finding is consistent with Machali et al. (2023), who illustrate the importance of adaptive informal religious education in minority communities, and with Tsauro and Djainudin (2026), who emphasize pedagogical adaptation and religious identity negotiation in minority contexts. Turki et al. (2025) similarly demonstrate the importance of adaptive da'wah strategies for addressing the social conditions of Muslim minorities. Comparing these perspectives with the Simalungun findings provides a more specific picture of mediation as an organizational practice. Coordination becomes necessary because counselors are limited relative to the geographical distribution of communities. The counselor therefore connects existing community structures rather than replacing them. This represents a distinctive contribution because mediation is demonstrated through information distribution,

scheduling, delegation, and coordination among community groups. Counselor effectiveness consequently appears through the strengthening of existing networks rather than through individual service delivery alone.

The facilitator role further indicates a shift from direct religious instruction toward community capacity building. The findings show that counselors provide guidance and assistance while community members increasingly undertake practical responsibilities, including scheduling activities, preparing venues, coordinating participants, and organizing social programs. This finding supports S. et al. (2025), who emphasize empowerment through Islamic education among marginalized Muslim communities, and Al-Hudawi et al. (2026), who identify community institutions as important resources for resilience among Muslim minorities. Comparing these perspectives with the present findings, however, indicates that empowerment in Simalungun is closely integrated with the continuity of everyday religious activities. Community independence does not mean the disappearance of counselor involvement; rather, counselors remain present through direction, communication, and periodic assistance. This distinction is important because sustainable religious guidance appears to be produced through a combination of professional facilitation and community ownership. Thus, the contribution of the study lies in identifying shared responsibility as a practical mechanism for sustaining religious activities under conditions of limited counselor availability.

The findings regarding supporting and inhibiting factors are also broadly consistent with previous studies emphasizing organizational support, community leadership, participation, and contextual adaptation as important conditions for religious guidance. Karim et al. (2025) demonstrate how Muslim communities negotiate religious participation within multicultural villages, while Syariah et al. (2025) show that Muslim communities in minority contexts require adaptive responses to their specific social environments. Shafique et al. (2026) further illustrate that faith-based activities depend on facilitators, community participation, and contextual conditions. Comparing these findings with the present study shows that support from mosque administrators, religious figures, community leaders, and community organizations facilitates continuity. In contrast, agricultural occupations and geographical distance restrict residents' time and accessibility. However, unlike situations in which contextual barriers may reduce participation, the Simalungun communities respond through scheduling adjustments, task sharing, and local coordination. This finding suggests that community organization functions as a contextual response to structural limitations. The study therefore contributes an empirical explanation of how geographically dispersed Muslim communities negotiate limited time, distance, and counselor availability while maintaining recurring religious activities.

Overall, this study contributes a community-based model of Islamic religious guidance that integrates religious counseling, community participation, youth involvement, and social activities within a Muslim-minority context. Existing literature discusses these dimensions from complementary perspectives: Machali et al. (2023) emphasize informal Islamic education among minority Muslims; Elizabeth et al. (2026) and Latif (2026) highlight the educational and social functions of majelis *Taklim*; Jati et al. (2024) emphasize Muslim youth participation; and Al-Hudawi et al. (2026) demonstrate the resilience function of community institutions. Comparing these perspectives with the present findings reveals that the distinctive contribution of the Simalungun case lies in connecting these dimensions through the roles of counselors as mediators, facilitators, and motivators. At the same time, community organizations function as active

implementation partners. The novelty lies in showing that continuity of Islamic guidance in a minority setting is sustained not primarily through constant counselor presence but through the institutionalization of shared responsibilities within local communities. This model highlights decentralized religious guidance as a mechanism for sustaining religious education, youth engagement, social participation, and community resilience among geographically dispersed Muslim populations.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the continuity of Islamic religious guidance in Muslim-minority communities in Simalungun is sustained not solely through the presence of religious counselors but through shared responsibility between counselors and community organizations, including majelis *Taklim*, perwiritan groups, mosque youth, and religious-based social groups. The main lesson is that effective religious guidance in geographically dispersed minority settings requires community ownership, with counselors functioning as mediators, community mobilizers, and facilitators rather than as the sole providers of religious instruction. The implications of the findings are both practical and conceptual: religious guidance programs should strengthen community capacity, delegate appropriate responsibilities, and develop collaborative networks that enable religious activities to continue despite limited counselor availability. Scientifically, this study contributes a community-based perspective that connects religious counseling, community participation, youth engagement, and social activities within a decentralized model of Islamic religious guidance. However, the study is limited by its qualitative case study design and focus on Muslim-minority communities in one regency, which restricts broader generalization. Future research should compare similar models across different minority regions and examine how community-based religious guidance develops over time and responds to changing social conditions.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest was reported.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

Generative AI was employed exclusively for linguistic refinement and readability improvements. All outputs were carefully verified and edited by the authors, who retain full accountability for the content of this manuscript

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