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The Role of Islamic Guidance and Counseling in Strengthening the Faith and Spirituality of the Community in Aek Nabara, Labuhan Batu

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the role of Islamic counseling in strengthening the faith and spirituality of the community in Aek Nabara, Labuhan Batu Regency, and to identify supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. This study used a descriptive qualitative method with a field study approach. Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, and documentation with Islamic counselors, community leaders, and the assisted community. The results indicate that Islamic counseling plays a significant role in enhancing community spirituality. This is evident in increased awareness of worship, particularly congregational prayer, an improved understanding of Islamic faith, and an increase in religious activities such as religious study groups and religious study groups. Furthermore, there has been an increase in moral awareness, more harmonious social relations, and community social awareness. Supporting factors include support from religious leaders, the local government, community enthusiasm, and the active role of religious counselors. Inhibiting factors include community busyness, limited number of counselors, low religious understanding among some, and the influence of modernization. In conclusion, Islamic counseling plays a strategic role in strengthening faith and enhancing community spirituality in Aek Nabara, Labuhan Batu Regency.

1. Introduction

Islamic guidance and counseling plays a strategic role in guiding and guiding the community to stay on the path of Islamic teachings. Amidst the dynamics of modern life, characterized by moral crisis, spiritual aridity, and a weakening understanding of the faith, the presence of Islamic guidance and counseling has become an increasingly urgent need for society. Abdullahi states that Islamic guidance and counseling is a holistic framework that emphasizes Islamic values such as compassion, forgiveness, and spiritual resilience to enhance personal and social

well-being based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. This approach seeks to integrate spiritual and moral dimensions into modern counseling practice. Key concepts: integration of Qur'anic values in counseling, spiritual and psychological well-being (Abdullahi, 2025). Harahap added that in order to be better, the Qur'an needs to be memorized because memorizing the Qur'an is a noble activity (Harahap, 2023).

Sadiyah & Fitriyani examine how Qur'anic and Hadith-based counseling strengthens individuals' mental and spiritual health, demonstrating that a Qur'anic approach can provide inner peace and overall life balance. Key concepts: Qur'anic-Hadith counseling, mental and spiritual well-being (Sadiyah and Fitriyani, 2025). Amirullah, Fitriana, and Azwar demonstrate that guidance and counseling services based on the sirah (Islamic historical message) are effective in enhancing family spirituality through understanding the context of the Qur'an and Hadith, particularly in the formation of faith values in the household. Key concepts: family as a spiritual unit, use of sirah in counseling (Amirullah, Fitriana, and Azwar, 2025).

Khofifah & Irsyadunnas discuss the importance of the Qur'an's function in Islamic guidance and counseling, explaining that the Qur'an not only functions as a source of values but also as a method for forming a client's spiritual and moral orientation in greater depth. Key concepts: the function of the Qur'an as a basis for guidance methods, spiritual orientation in counseling (Khofifah, 2024). Dzikra et al. developed an Islamic spirituality-based self-guidance model, a self-counseling approach based on Islamic spirituality to address stress, demonstrating that Islamic spiritual practices can be a self-help strategy in modern life. Key concepts: spiritual self-guidance, Islamic spirituality-based stress management (Dzikra et al., 2025).

Talitha Khairina and Hafidz explained that character education in Islamic Religious Education learning is able to increase students' religious values through the integrated role of teachers, parents, and the school environment (Khairina and Hafidz, 2026). In addition, Dara Amalia Thirafi and Triono Ali Mustofa explained that the strategy of Islamic Religious Education teachers is able to increase students' spirituality through a sustainable religious development approach (Thirafi and Mustofa, 2026). Nur Hani'ah and Mohammad Zakki Azani explained that the strategy of improving the quality of Islamic education is able to systematically shape the religious character of students (Hani'ah and Azani, 2026). Fitriyanti and colleagues showed that the strategy of Islamic Religious Education teachers based on multiple intelligences was able to improve spiritual learning and character of students (Fitriyanti et al., 2026). Other research also shows that internalizing Islamic values through religious education can increase the religious understanding of students and society (Dahlan, 2020). Islamic counseling has a strategic role in improving the faith and spirituality of the community through continuous and structured guidance (Harahap, 2020).

Faith is the primary foundation of a Muslim's life. A strong faith fosters inner peace, steadfastness, and behavior aligned with Islamic values. However, the reality in society shows that some individuals experience a decline in spiritual quality, weak religious commitment, and a lack of awareness in consistently practicing Islamic values. This condition is partly caused by the lack of continuous and directed faith

development. This condition is also found in the community of Aek Nabara, Labuhan Batu Regency, which has diverse social backgrounds and levels of religious understanding. Despite the presence of religious activities and the role of Islamic religious instructors, the effectiveness of Islamic counseling in strengthening faith and fostering community spirituality still requires in-depth study. This is crucial to determine the extent to which the guidance provided is able to address the spiritual challenges of the local community.

Therefore, integrated Islamic counseling, which strengthens faith and spirituality, is an important solution for building the spiritual resilience of the community. This research is important to be conducted to examine the role of Islamic counseling guidance in strengthening faith and shaping the spirituality of the community in Aek Nabara, Labuhan Batu Regency, so that it can become the basis for developing a more effective and contextual Islamic counseling model.

2. Methodology

Faith is the primary foundation of a Muslim's life. A strong faith fosters inner peace, steadfastness, and behavior aligned with Islamic values. However, the reality in society shows that some individuals experience a decline in spiritual quality, weak religious commitment, and a lack of awareness in consistently practicing Islamic values. This condition is partly caused by the lack of continuous and directed faith development. This condition is also found in the community of Aek Nabara, Labuhan Batu Regency, which has diverse social backgrounds and levels of religious understanding. Despite the presence of religious activities and the role of Islamic religious instructors, the effectiveness of Islamic counseling in strengthening faith and fostering community spirituality still requires in-depth study. This is crucial to determine the extent to which the guidance provided is able to address the spiritual challenges of the local community.

Therefore, integrated Islamic counseling, which strengthens faith and spirituality, is an important solution for building the spiritual resilience of the community. This research is important to be conducted to examine the role of Islamic counseling guidance in strengthening faith and shaping the spirituality of the community in Aek Nabara, Labuhan Batu Regency, so that it can become the basis for developing a more effective and contextual Islamic counseling model (Abdussamad and Sik, 2021; Moleong, 2006; Arikunto, 2011). Second, observations were conducted to obtain empirical data regarding the implementation of Islamic outreach activities in the field. Researchers directly observed religious activities such as religious study groups, religious study groups, and other da'wah activities taking place in Aek Nabara.

Through these observations, researchers were able to clearly observe the interactions between the outreach workers and the community, the methods of delivering material, and the community's response and participation in these activities (Adlini et al., 2022; Sugiyono, 2008; Saebani, 2009). Third, documentation was used as a supporting technique to supplement the data from

interviews and observations. Documentation included collecting activity archives, study schedules, outreach materials, activity photos, and relevant religious notes or reports. This documentation technique served to strengthen the validity of the data through source triangulation (Sari et al., 2022; Zularwan, Rasyidin, and Sinaga, 2017; Sitorus 2011).

In addition, the researcher also conducted a literature study as secondary data, reviewing books, scientific journals, and other relevant sources related to Islamic counseling, faith, and spirituality. This literature study served as a theoretical basis for analyzing and interpreting the research findings. By using a combination of these data collection techniques, it is hoped that this study will produce a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the role of Islamic counseling in strengthening faith and fostering spirituality in the community of Aek Nabara, Labuhan Batu Regency.

3. Results and Discussion

General Description of Research Location

Aek Nabara is an area in Labuhan Batu Regency, North Sumatra, characterized by a heterogeneous community with diverse social backgrounds, educational backgrounds, and religious understandings. The majority of the Aek Nabara community is Muslim, with a fairly active religious activity, including regular religious study groups (Quran recital), religious study groups (Majelis Taklim), mosque activities, and Islamic counseling conducted by religious instructors from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Based on field data, there are approximately eight mosques and 15 active prayer rooms (Musholla) serving as centers of community religious activities. Regular religious activities include weekly religious study groups (Quran recital), women's religious study groups (Majelis Taklim), mosque youth religious studies (Majelis Remaja), Friday sermons, and Islamic counseling. There are three active Islamic counselors in the Aek Nabara area who regularly provide religious guidance to the community.

Furthermore, the research process was conducted directly in the field using in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Researchers interviewed Islamic religious instructors, religious leaders, community leaders, and members of the community who participated in Islamic outreach activities. The interviews were semi-structured to allow researchers to gain in-depth information regarding the implementation of Islamic outreach, its impact on strengthening faith, and the supporting and inhibiting factors. Data collection took approximately one month, with visits to religious study locations, mosques, and the homes of community leaders. The data obtained were then analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions to obtain comprehensive research results. To obtain systematic data, researchers used the following interview guidelines:

Table 1. Research Interview Guidelines

No	Informant	Interview Questions
1		How is the implementation of Islamic counseling in Aek Nabara?
2		What material is presented in the extension activities?
3	Religious	What methods are used in religious counseling?
4	Counselor	How often are outreach activities carried out?
5		What are the supporting factors for implementing Islamic outreach?
6		What are the inhibiting factors in implementing Islamic outreach?
7		How does the community respond to Islamic outreach activities?
8	Religious leaders	Are there changes in the community's beliefs and spirituality after the outreach?
9	Public figure	How is community support for Islamic outreach activities?
10		How does outreach impact the social life of the community?
11		Do outreach activities help improve religious understanding?
12	Fostered	Are there any changes in the implementation of worship after attending the counseling?
13	Community	What obstacles do you face in participating in outreach activities?
14		Have religious study activities increased since the outreach?
15	All Informants	What are your hopes for the implementation of Islamic counseling in the future?

Implementation of Islamic Guidance and Counseling in Aek Nabara

Islamic outreach and guidance in Aek Nabara is conducted routinely and in a structured manner through various religious activities that directly involve the community. Based on interviews with religious instructors and community leaders, Islamic outreach and guidance activities are implemented through several activities, as follows:

Majelis Taklim study group

The Majelis Taklim (Islamic study group) is the main activity in the Islamic outreach program in Aek Nabara. These activities are held regularly once a week at a designated mosque or prayer room. These sessions are attended by people from various backgrounds, particularly women and men. The material presented in the Majelis Taklim covers strengthening Islamic faith (aqidah), monotheism (tawhid), Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) of worship, and Islamic morals. The materials are delivered through lectures, discussions, and a question-and-answer session. This aims to facilitate community understanding and direct application of the material in their daily lives. Based on observations, the community demonstrates considerable enthusiasm for participating in Majelis Taklim activities. This is evident in the increasing number of participants attending each Majelis Taklim activity.

Community Group Guidance

In addition to Islamic study groups (Majelis Taklim), religious instructors also provide group counseling to the community. This group counseling is provided to several community groups, such as housewives, mosque youth, and men's groups. Group counseling is conducted using a more personalized and communicative approach. The material provided is tailored to the needs of each group, such as strengthening faith, the importance of prayer, the dangers of shirk (polytheism), and

moral development. Based on interviews, the group counseling method is considered more effective because it allows the community to discuss directly and address the problems they face in their daily lives.

Sermons and Preaching

Religious instructors also conduct lectures and preaching activities on various occasions, such as Friday sermons, Islamic holiday commemorations, and other religious activities. These activities aim to provide broader spiritual guidance to the community. Through these lectures and preaching, religious instructors convey material on the importance of strengthening faith, increasing worship, and maintaining morals in community life. Based on observations, these lectures receive a positive response from the community.

The Impact of Islamic Guidance and Counseling on Community Spirituality

Based on interviews and observations, it was found that Islamic outreach has had a positive impact on strengthening the spiritual well-being of the community in Aek Nabara. Some of these impacts include:

Increasing Awareness of Worship

One of the most visible impacts of Islamic outreach is increased community awareness of the importance of performing religious duties. Prior to the regular outreach, attendance at congregational prayers was relatively low. However, after the ongoing outreach, there was a significant increase in mosque attendance. Observations showed that the number of people attending Maghrib and Isha prayers increased by approximately 30% to 60%. This demonstrates that Islamic outreach is effective in increasing community awareness of consistently performing religious duties.

Increasing Understanding of Faith

Islamic outreach also has an impact on increasing the community's understanding of Islamic faith. Previously, some people still had limited religious understanding, particularly regarding monotheism and the dangers of polytheism. However, after participating in outreach activities, the community began to understand the importance of upholding their faith and avoiding practices that are inconsistent with Islamic teachings. This is evident in the changing attitudes of the community, who are starting to abandon practices that conflict with Islamic faith.

Increased Religious Activities

In addition to increased worship, community religious activities have also increased. Prior to the regular guidance program, religious study groups were held only once a month. However, after the introduction of Islamic outreach programs, these activities increased to once a week. Furthermore, the mosque's women's and youth study groups have also become active again. This demonstrates that Islamic outreach programs can collectively bolster the community's religious spirit.

Increasing Moral and Ethical Awareness

Islamic counseling has also had an impact on improving community morals. Based on interviews, conflicts between residents have begun to decrease and social relations have become more harmonious. Furthermore, the community has become more active in social activities such as mutual cooperation and helping others. This demonstrates that spiritual development through Islamic counseling can shape a more religious community.

Supporting Factors for Islamic Guidance and Counseling

Based on the research results, several factors contributed to the success of Islamic outreach guidance in Aek Nabara, Labuhan Batu Regency. These factors play a crucial role in increasing the effectiveness of religious guidance and community spiritual strengthening activities. Support from various parties demonstrates that Islamic outreach guidance is not solely the responsibility of religious instructors, but also involves religious leaders, village government officials, and active community participation. Synergy between these various elements is key to the successful implementation of Islamic outreach guidance within the community. These supporting factors include the following:

Support from Religious Figures

Religious leaders play a crucial role in supporting the implementation of Islamic outreach programs in Aek Nabara. They actively encourage the community to participate in religious study groups and provide support for outreach programs. Interviews revealed that religious leaders frequently motivate the community to actively participate in religious activities organized by religious leaders. Furthermore, religious leaders assist in disseminating information regarding the schedule of Islamic study groups and religious study groups to the community. The significant influence of religious leaders within the community makes outreach activities more readily accepted. Public trust in religious leaders is also a crucial factor in increasing community participation in Islamic outreach activities. Religious leaders are also frequently directly involved in lectures and recitations, providing a concrete example for the community. With the support of religious leaders, Islamic outreach activities can be more effective and sustainable.

Village Government Support

The village government also supports Islamic outreach activities by providing facilities and supporting community religious activities. Based on research findings, the village government assists in providing venues for activities such as mosques, prayer rooms, and village halls. Furthermore, the village government provides administrative support and facilitates religious activities conducted by religious instructors. The village government's support demonstrates its concern for the community's spiritual development. The village government also plays a role in encouraging the community to participate in religious activities through social and community outreach activities. With village government support, Islamic outreach activities can be carried out in an organized and scheduled manner. Furthermore,

adequate facilities also help improve the community's comfort in participating in Islamic study groups. This demonstrates the village government's strategic role in supporting the success of Islamic outreach..

Public Enthusiasm

High community enthusiasm is a key factor contributing to the success of Islamic outreach programs in Aek Nabara. This is evident in the increasing number of participants in religious study groups and religious study groups. Observations show a strong interest in participating in religious activities organized by religious instructors. They not only attend religious study groups but also actively participate in discussions and Q&A sessions. This active participation demonstrates that Islamic outreach activities provide tangible benefits to their lives. Furthermore, the community helps disseminate information related to Islamic study activities to other residents. This enthusiasm is also evident in the increase in religious activities such as youth study groups and women's religious study groups. This demonstrates that Islamic outreach activities are able to collectively revitalize the community's religious spirit. With such high community enthusiasm, Islamic outreach activities can continue sustainably.

Active Religious Instructor

Active and consistent religious instructors are a crucial factor in the success of Islamic outreach programs. Research shows that religious instructors routinely conduct religious study sessions, lectures, and community group guidance. They also engage in personal interactions with the community to understand their spiritual needs. Furthermore, they act as motivators, encouraging the community to improve their worship and religious understanding. The consistent guidance provided by religious instructors has a positive impact on changing community behavior. Religious instructors also employ various methods, such as lectures, discussions, and persuasive approaches, to facilitate understanding. The active participation of religious instructors is also evident in their involvement in community social activities. This fosters a closer and more harmonious relationship between the instructors and the community. With active religious instructors, Islamic outreach activities can run optimally.

Factors Inhibiting Islamic Guidance and Counseling

In addition to supporting factors, several inhibiting factors also exist in the implementation of Islamic outreach guidance in Aek Nabara, Labuhan Batu Regency. These inhibiting factors pose challenges for religious instructors in optimally implementing community spiritual guidance. The obstacles encountered stem from various aspects, ranging from community busyness, limited number of religious instructors, low religious understanding, and the influence of modernization. Nevertheless, various efforts are being made to overcome these obstacles so that outreach activities continue to run smoothly. These inhibiting factors include the following:

Busy Society

Some people are busy with work, making it difficult to regularly attend religious study groups. Interviews revealed that the majority of people work as traders, farmers, and private sector employees, with busy schedules. This prevents them from consistently attending outreach activities. Furthermore, the study groups, which are held at specific times, sometimes clash with community work schedules. This presents a challenge for religious instructors in increasing community participation. Nevertheless, some people still try to attend Islamic study groups when they have free time. The busy schedule also leads to a lack of involvement in other religious activities. Therefore, adjustments to the activity schedule are necessary to make it more flexible. Therefore, the busy schedule is one of the factors hindering the implementation of Islamic outreach guidance.

Lack of Religious Counselors

The limited number of religious instructors has resulted in suboptimal guidance. Based on field data, there are only a few religious instructors assigned to the Aek Nabara area. This forces religious instructors to cover several areas simultaneously. This situation prevents intensive guidance from being provided to the entire community. Furthermore, the limited number of instructors also prevents outreach activities from being implemented evenly. Religious instructors also have limited time to provide guidance to community groups. This hinders the effectiveness of Islamic outreach. Nevertheless, religious instructors strive to carry out their duties optimally. Therefore, an increase in the number of religious instructors is needed to ensure optimal guidance.

Low Religious Education

Some communities still have limited religious understanding. This is evident in the fact that some people still lack a proper understanding of the basics of faith and worship. Low levels of religious education are one factor hindering the process of community spiritual development. Furthermore, communities with low religious understanding tend to be less active in participating in religious study groups. This situation requires religious instructors to provide guidance in stages and continuously. They must also use simpler methods to make it easier for the community to understand. Low levels of religious education also lead to the persistence of religious practices that are not in accordance with Islamic teachings. Therefore, fostering faith is a primary focus of Islamic outreach activities. Thus, low levels of religious education are a factor inhibiting the spiritual development of the community.

The Influence of Modernization

The influence of technology and social media also poses a challenge to community spiritual development. Technological developments have brought about changes in people's lifestyles, leading to increasingly modern ones. This has led some people to spend more time on social media than participating in religious activities. Furthermore, the unfiltered flow of information can also influence people's

understanding of religion. The influence of modernization has also led to a decline in the younger generation's interest in religious activities. This situation presents a challenge for religious instructors in increasing community participation. Therefore, religious instructors need to utilize technology as an effective medium for da'wah (Islamic outreach). The use of social media as a means of outreach can be a solution to the challenges of modernization. Thus, the influence of modernization is both an inhibiting factor and a challenge in Islamic outreach guidance.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that Islamic guidance and counseling plays a significant role in strengthening the faith and spirituality of the Aek Nabara community. This is in line with Abdullahi's theory, which states that Islamic guidance and counseling is a holistic framework that emphasizes Islamic values such as compassion, forgiveness, and spiritual resilience to improve personal and social well-being based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. This approach seeks to integrate spiritual and moral dimensions into modern counseling practice. Key concepts: integration of Qur'anic values in counseling, spiritual and psychological well-being (Abdullahi, 2025).

Furthermore, the research findings also align with Sadiyah and Fitriyani's opinion that a Qur'anic approach can provide inner peace and overall balance in life. Key concepts: Qur'anic-Hadith counseling, mental and spiritual well-being (Sadiyah and Fitriyani, 2025). The results of this study are also supported by several studies showing that Islamic education plays a crucial role in enhancing the spirituality and religious character of the community. Research by Talitha Khairina and Hafidz explains that character education in Islamic Religious Education (ISE) can enhance students' religious values through the integrated role of teachers, parents, and the school environment (Khairina and Hafidz, 2026). This finding is in line with research that Islamic counseling is able to increase the moral and spiritual awareness of the community in Aek Nabara.

In addition, research by Dara Amalia Thirafi and Triono Ali Mustofa explains that the strategy of Islamic Religious Education teachers is able to increase students' spirituality through a sustainable religious development approach (Thirafi and Mustofa, 2026). This shows that spiritual guidance through religious counseling is also effective in improving the spiritual quality of society. Another study by Nur Hani'ah and Mohammad Zakki Azani explains that strategies for improving the quality of Islamic education are able to systematically shape the religious character of students (Hani'ah and Azani, 2026). This finding is in line with research results that the activities of the religious study group and group guidance are able to form a religious community.

Furthermore, research by Fitriyanti and colleagues shows that Islamic Religious Education teachers' strategies based on multiple intelligences are able to improve students' spiritual learning and character (Fitriyanti et al., 2026). This supports the research findings that diverse approaches in Islamic counseling are able to increase

the community's understanding of faith. Other research also shows that internalizing Islamic values through religious education can increase the religious understanding of students and society (Dahlan, 2020). This strengthens the research results that Islamic counseling plays a role in increasing the community's understanding of faith in a sustainable manner. Islamic counseling has a strategic role in improving the faith and spirituality of the community through continuous and structured guidance (Harahap, 2020). Thus, Islamic counseling has been proven to be able to: Strengthen the community's faith, Increase spirituality, Increase religious activities, Form a religious community.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that: Islamic counseling in Aek Nabara has a positive impact on strengthening the community's faith and spirituality, marked by increased worship activities, religious understanding, and moral awareness. Supporting factors for success include support from religious leaders, village government, community enthusiasm, and active religious instructors. Inhibiting factors include community busyness, limited instructors, low religious education, and the influence of modernization. This researcher was funded by the Competitive Research Grandt of tha Center for Research and Community Service (P3M), Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam (STAI) As-Sunnah, Deli Serdang, Indonesia.

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