



Communication Competence of Islamic Religious Counselors in Preventing Early Marriage Through Guidance for School-Age Adolescents (BRUS) at State Vocational School 2 Barru

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the Communication Competence of Islamic Religious Counselors in Preventing Early Marriage Through Guidance for School-Age Adolescents (BRUS) at SMK Negeri 2 Barru. The background of this study is based on the high number of early marriages which have a negative impact on education, health, and the future of adolescents, so that an active role of religious counselors is needed as agents of change in providing education and guidance to adolescents. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving religious counselors, teachers, and students as informants. The results of the study indicate that (1) religious counselors have communication competencies that include interpersonal communication skills, persuasive communication, dialogic and empathetic in order to build emotional closeness with students. (2) The BRUS program at SMK Negeri 2 shows positive achievements thanks to the support of various supporting factors, including the openness of the school, the competence of religious counselors in effective and contextual communication, and active student participation. (3) The communication strategy used by Islamic religious counselors in the BRUS program at SMK Negeri 2 Barru has proven effective in preventing early marriage. A persuasive approach through emotional, rational, and religious aspects successfully touches both the affective and cognitive aspects of students, thus encouraging conscious attitude change. This strategy is complemented by the use of communicative and contextual communication tailored to the background and dynamics of students' lives. Although this approach is relevant to the needs of adolescents, its effectiveness still needs to be improved through flexible time planning, small guidance groups, and cross-sector collaboration.

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of underage marriage is not new in Indonesia. This has become a common social issue among adolescents, where adolescent girls are the main victims, although initially it occurred mostly in rural areas, but now the trend is starting to shift to urban areas, especially in poor families with low levels of education or school dropouts, therefore it is important for parents and the environment to help children marry at the right age. Factors that influence adolescents to marry at an early age include, due to education, knowledge, customs, parental attitudes, economy and children's attitudes, in order to ease the burden on their parents, their daughters are married to people who can afford it without thinking about the impact of early marriage.

One of the prevention efforts carried out is through the School-Age Youth Guidance (BRUS) program carried out by Islamic religious extension workers. This program aims to provide education to teenagers

about the importance of postponing marriage until they are physically, mentally, and socially mature. However, the effectiveness of this program is highly dependent on the competence of Islamic religious extension workers in delivering materials, communicating with adolescents, and understanding local social and cultural dynamics.

With the duties and competencies of Islamic Religious Extension Workers, of course, religious extension workers are in direct contact with many parties. This has caused interest in extension workers to interact with various levels of society. The levels of society that are the target of the extension program include various age groups ranging from children, adolescents, adults and the elderly. By interacting with the community level, extension workers can practice the knowledge that has been obtained. In addition, extension workers will also find it easier to listen to the complaints of the community and continue to learn to be community protectors.

The communication competence of religious extension workers is the key to the effectiveness of the BRUS program. Good communication will facilitate the process of value transfer, internalization of moral messages, and strengthening the spirituality of adolescents. According to Mc Croskey, communication competence includes the ability to convey messages effectively and ethically in various social contexts. In this case, religious extension workers are required to have interpersonal communication skills, empathy, active listening skills, and skills in using religious language that is relevant to the lives of today's adolescents. In vocational high school environments such as SMK Negeri 2 Barru, adolescents face a double challenge: on the one hand they are preparing to enter the world of work, on the other hand they are also experiencing a search for identity that is vulnerable to hasty decisions, including in the case of marrying young. This is where the BRUS program comes into play as a dialogue space between extension workers and students, to build critical and religious awareness of the impact of early marriage.

Allah says in QS. An-Nisa / 4 : 6.

وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ فَإِنْ آنَسْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوهَا إِسْرَافًا وَبِدَارًا أَن يَكْبَرُوا وَمَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعِ كَلِمَتِي (peace be upon him) said: "O Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)." *الْيَتَامَىٰ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فَأَشْهُدُوا عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا*

Translation:

Test the orphans until they are old enough to marry. Then, if according to your judgment they are clever, give them their wealth. Do not eat them (orphans' property) beyond the limits of propriety and (do not haste (spend them) before they are mature. Whoever is able, then let him refrain from eating the orphan's property, and whoever is poor, let him eat it in a good way. Then, when you hand over the property to them, you shall have witnesses of Allah Sufficient as a watchman.

This verse is part of the Quran which discusses the protection and management of orphans' property. The age of puberty (physical maturity and sharia) is often used as an indicator of readiness, but it is not enough just with age. There must also be mental and intellectual skills (rushd) in managing assets. In this context, the age limit has been regulated in Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Marriage, which sets the minimum age for marriage as a form of physical and mental readiness.

School-Age Youth Guidance (BRUS) is present as a solution intended for school students under the age of 19. In this program activity, the importance of reproductive health, stunting is explained, underage marriage, marriage age limit, and readiness to marry mentally and economically. With the existence of Marriage Guidance for School-Age Adolescents (BRUS), it is a hope for efforts to reduce underage marriage and as a provision of knowledge for school teenagers.

The complex impact of early marriage has the potential to degrade the quality of Indonesia's young generation, so it is important to identify the factors that encourage adolescents to marry at an early age, so that preventive measures can be taken to reduce the incidence of early marriage. So here it is very necessary to provide knowledge for underage students who have the initiative to marry under their age so that this knowledge is very important for teenagers to be ready and mature towards marriage and there is no thought of getting married at a younger age. With information and knowledge related to the risks of early marriage by students in school, it will have a good impact on future generations.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of describing in depth the communication competence of Islamic religious extension workers in carrying out School-Age Youth Guidance (BRUS) as an effort to prevent early marriage at SMK Negeri 2 Barru. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand phenomena holistically in the social and cultural context in which the research was conducted. The research was carried out at SMK Negeri 2 Barru, Barru Regency, South Sulawesi. This school was chosen because it is one of the secondary education institutions that actively collaborates with the Office of the Ministry of Religion of Barru Regency in the BRUS program. The research activities were carried out for two months, namely from June to July 2025. During this period, the researcher observed BRUS activities, interviewed various informants, and documented the guidance activities that took place.

Research subjects include

The Principal of SMK Negeri 2 Barru, as the person in charge of policy and facilitator of religious activities in the school.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, who act as the main partners of religious extension workers in delivering religious materials in the classroom and in extracurricular activities.

Guidance and Counseling Teachers (BK), who play a role in providing personal and career counseling and serve as a liaison between students and religious extension workers.

Counselors or Islamic Religious Extension Officers, as the main implementer of the BRUS program in schools.

Students participating in the BRUS program, especially those who are 15–18 years old and actively participate in mentoring activities.

The selection of informants was carried out using the purposive sampling technique, which is to select individuals who are considered to know best, understand, and be directly involved in the implementation of BRUS activities and have relevant views on efforts to prevent early marriage.

The number of research informants consisted of:

1 principal

2 PAI teachers

1 BK teacher

1 Islamic religious extension worker from the Ministry of Religion of Barru

10 students (5 males and 5 females) who are active participants in the BRUS program.

The total number of informants is 15 people.

Three main techniques were used in this study, namely:

Participatory Observation

The researcher conducted direct observation of the School-Age Youth Guidance activities in the SMK Negeri 2 Barru environment. Observations were made to get a real picture of how religious extension workers interact, communicate, and convey messages to students. The aspects observed included communication style, body language, student involvement, and group dynamics during the mentoring process.

In-depth Interview

Interviews were conducted with all key informants using a semi-structured interview guide. The questions were directed at their perceptions, experiences, and views on the effectiveness of communication of religious counselors in preventing early marriage. Through this technique, reflective and in-depth data was obtained related to the role of extension workers, communication strategies, obstacles, and results achieved by the BRUS program.

The documentation

of the documents collected includes reports on BRUS activities, implementation schedules, guidance materials, photos of activities, and evaluation notes from the school and the Ministry of Religion. This document is used to strengthen the data from observations and interviews.

Data analysis was carried out interactively with stages according to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018), namely:

Data reduction – selecting, focusing, and simplifying field data according to the research theme.

Data presentation – organizing information in the form of a descriptive narrative that describes the communication patterns and interaction processes between religious extension workers and students.

Conclusion drawing – is done in stages by verifying field findings to ensure the validity of the data.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, source triangulation techniques and techniques are used.

Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information obtained from religious extension workers, BK teachers, PAI teachers, and students.

The triangulation technique was carried out by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation.

In addition, the researcher also conducted member checking on key informants to ensure that the interpretation of the data was in accordance with their experiences and perceptions.

This research adheres to the ethical principles of social research, including:

Obtained official permission from the Principal of SMK Negeri 2 Barru and the Office of the Ministry of Religion of Barru Regency.

Maintain the confidentiality of the identity of the informant.

Respect the right of the informant to refuse or terminate participation at any time.

Use data for academic purposes only.

With this approach, the research is expected to be able to authentically and ethically describe how Islamic religious extension workers use their communication competencies in guiding school-age adolescents to postpone marriage until they are mentally, spiritually, and socially ready.

RESULTS

Overview of the BRUS Program at SMK Negeri 2 Barru

The School-Age Youth Guidance Program (BRUS) at SMK Negeri 2 Barru is one of the collaborative religious activities between the school and the Office of the Ministry of Religion of Barru Regency. This program has been running regularly since 2022 and is held every two weeks. The main goal is to provide religious, moral, and social understanding to students so that they can live adolescence responsibly, especially in dealing with issues of early marriage, promiscuity, and digital moral degradation.

BRUS activities are usually held in the school hall every Friday after the implementation of the Dhuha prayer in congregation. The activity began with the reading of the holy verses of the Qur'an, followed by a counseling session by Islamic religious extension workers from the Ministry of Religion Barru, as well as interactive discussions with students. Guidance materials include:

- The meaning of maturity in Islam,
- The social and psychological impact of early marriage,
- Ethics of adolescent association,
- Management of emotions and life goals, and
- Spiritual readiness for the future.

Observations showed that students seemed enthusiastic about participating in the activity, especially because the extension workers used a communicative approach, used adolescent language, and inserted contextual humor with the local Bugis culture. Students are given space to ask questions and express opinions, so that the atmosphere of guidance becomes dialogical and not one-way lectures.

The principal emphasized that this program is very helpful for schools in fostering student character. In his interview, he said:

"We feel helped by the presence of religious extension workers from the Ministry of Religion Barru. They can convey religious messages in a language that is more touching to students. Sometimes when the teacher speaks, the children get bored quickly. But if they are extension workers, they listen because their delivery is like their own friends." (Interview, Principal, June 24, 2025)

The statement shows that the role of interpersonal communication of religious extension workers is a key factor in the success of BRUS activities.

Communication Competencies of Islamic Religious Extension Workers

The results of the study show that the communication competence of Islamic religious extension workers at SMK Negeri 2 Barru can be categorized into three main dimensions:

Personal and Social Competence

Religious counselors involved in the BRUS program show high empathic ability to interact with students. They not only act as speakers, but also as active listeners who understand the feelings and psychological situations of adolescents.

In an interview session, one of the XI grade students said:

"Extension workers are pleasant to talk to, not patronizing. If we confide in us about friends or problems at home, he listens carefully and gives advice without anger." (Interview, Student, June 27, 2025)

This kind of empathetic approach strengthens trust between students and extension workers. In the context of interpersonal communication theory (Devito, 2019), the ability to build trust is the main foundation for effective communication success. Religious counselors who are able to show emotional concern tend to instill moral and religious values more easily in students.

In addition, extension workers also have the ability to manage small group communication, such as when conducting thematic discussions. They use ice breaking, storytelling, and peer sharing techniques so that students participate more actively. This shows that extension workers have mastered social communication skills that support a comfortable non-formal learning atmosphere.

Professional Competencies

The professional competence of extension workers can be seen from the mastery of da'wah materials and delivery strategies that are adaptive to the character of adolescents. Based on the results of the interview, the religious extension worker explained that the material presented was always adjusted to actual issues relevant to students' lives. For example, on the theme "Taking Care of Yourself in the Digital Era," the extension workers linked the Islamic teachings on ghaddul bashar (subduing the gaze) with the phenomenon of social media and the culture of self-exposure among adolescents.

Extension workers also use references from the Qur'an and hadith that are contextualized with students' experiences. For example, QS. An-Nur verse 32 about the encouragement of marriage is associated with the concept of maturity (rusyd) in Islam, that marriage is not just legality, but a moral and spiritual responsibility.

The PAI teacher at the school said that:

"Extension workers are able to adapt the material to the language of vocational school children. Sometimes they use examples of daily life, even associating them with their ideals and the world of work." (Interview, PAI Guru, June 30, 2025)

This proves that the professional competence of religious counselors lies not only in theological knowledge, but also in the skill of translating religious messages in the psychosocial context of adolescents.

Cultural Competence

As an area steeped in Bugis cultural values, effective communication requires religious extension workers to understand the cultural context of students. In Bugis culture, there are values such as siri' (self-respect), pesse (empathy), and lempu (honesty). Religious extension workers in Barru consciously integrate these values in counseling.

One of the extension workers explained:

"When we talk about early marriage, I often associate it with the value of series'. I said, if you are not ready to get married, then you end up not being able to provide for your wife or children, it actually embarrasses the family. So religious and cultural values must go together." (Interview, Religious Counselor, July 5, 2025)

This approach is effective because it connects religious messages with local value structures, making it easier for students to receive moral messages. This is in line with the theory of contextual communication (Hall, 1989) that messages will be more meaningful when they are conveyed according to the social and cultural context of the audience.

Communication Strategies in Early Marriage Prevention

From the results of observations and interviews, several communication strategies used by religious extension workers in BRUS activities were found:

Educational Persuasive Approach

Extension workers use education-based persuasion techniques, not prohibitions. They emphasize more the logical consequences of early marriage, such as health, economic risks, and moral responsibility.

For example, extension workers show educational videos and invite students to discuss the psychological impact of getting married young.

Dialogical Communication

Extension workers avoid the one-way lecture method. They provide a question and answer space and encourage students to express their opinions. This approach increases participation and a sense of belonging to the message being conveyed.

Use of Adolescent Language and Social Media

In some sessions, extension workers used interactive slides and viral examples on social media to grab students' attention. For example, discussing TikTok content about young marriage which is then associated with Islamic teachings. This shows the adaptation of extension workers to the characteristics of generation Z.

Personal Counseling Approach

In addition to group guidance, extension workers also open individual consultation services for students who have personal problems or are indicated to be at risk of early marriage. BK teachers are an important partner in this stage. BK teacher said:

"There are some students who confide in serious dating relationships. We directed them to talk to the extension workers, and Alhamdulillah, the results were positive, they were able to rethink." (Interview, Teacher BK, July 10, 2025)

Institutional Collaboration

The BRUS program does not run alone. There is coordination between the school, religious extension workers, PAI teachers, and the Ministry of Religion Barru. This synergy ensures the continuity of activities and strong administrative support.

The Impact of the BRUS Program on Student Awareness

Based on the results of interviews and observations, there were positive changes in students' behavior and understanding after participating in BRUS regularly. Some indicators found:

Increased Understanding of Marriage Maturity Most students are beginning to understand that marriage is not only a matter of love, but also mental and economic readiness.

"I used to think that if you liked and were loyal to each other, you could get married quickly. But after joining BRUS, I realized that there were many responsibilities that I was not able to afford." (Interview, Grade XII students, July 15, 2025)

Increased Self-Control

Students who initially tended to be open to dating relationships are now more cautious and focused on education. This shows the success of moral-spiritual communication in influencing behavior.

The Formation of Student Religious Communities

The BRUS program encourages the formation of small groups of students who regularly discuss the theme of Islamic youth and hold religious activities, such as Islamic student discussions and Friday afternoon studies.

Decline in Potential Early Marriage Cases

Based on the reports of BK teachers and extension workers, in 2024 there were two students who planned to get married after graduation, but after attending intensive guidance, both postponed marriage until they completed their studies and got permanent jobs.

Theoretical Analysis and Implications

These findings reinforce the theory of effective communication competencies (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2011), which emphasizes three main aspects: knowledge, skills, and motivation. Islamic religious extension workers at SMK Negeri 2 Barru show the three synergistic.

Theoretically, the practice of da'wah communication applied in BRUS represents the contextual da'wah paradigm, which is to convey Islamic values according to the social context of the audience. This approach has proven to be more effective than the traditional lecture model.

From the social side, the BRUS program acts as a form of non-formal preventive education that complements formal education in schools. The involvement of religious extension workers is a bridge between educational institutions and the community, helping to strengthen the system of protecting adolescents from the practice of early marriage.

In terms of policy, the results of this study recommend:

Advanced training for religious extension workers in communication of adolescent counseling and digital da'wah.

Increasing cross-sector collaboration between schools, the Ministry of Religion, and the Education Office.

Strengthening the BRUS curriculum to include actual issues such as gender literacy, Islamic reproductive health, and social media ethics.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that the communication competence of Islamic religious extension workers has a very important role in preventing early marriage among high school teenagers. In the implementation of the School-Age Youth Guidance (BRUS) program at SMK Negeri 2 Barru, Islamic religious counselors play a role not only as providers of religious materials, but also as moral communicators and social mentors who understand the psychological condition of adolescents. Good communication competence makes extension workers able to convey religious messages effectively, so that they are accepted and appreciated by students with an open, warm, and fun atmosphere.

Based on the results of observations and interviews, religious extension workers in BRUS activities showed strong interpersonal communication skills. They are able to build positive emotional relationships with students through polite language, persuasive speech, and friendly and empathetic facial expressions. Extension workers do not use an authoritarian or intimidating approach, but rather dialogue in parallel with students as thinking partners. This approach is in line with the principle of da'wah bil hikmah, which is to convey religious teachings with wisdom and gentleness as explained in the Qur'an surah An-Nahl verse 125. With effective communication, extension workers not only transfer information, but also transform values and moral awareness among students.

In the context of preventing early marriage, extension workers prioritize persuasive-educational communication. They explain rationally the negative impact of early marriage on a person's future education, mental readiness, and economic life. Through true stories, examples of successful young figures, and approaches that are relevant to adolescent life, counselors have succeeded in fostering awareness that marriage is not a solution to the problem of love or social pressure, but a big responsibility that requires maturity. This communication strategy shows a balance between cognitive and affective approaches, where religious messages are conveyed not only to be known but also to be lived.

Islamic religious extension workers also integrate elements of local culture in the delivery of messages, especially by utilizing Bugis values such as *siri'* (self-respect) and *pesse* (empathy). These values are used as an entrance to strengthen the message of *da'wah* so that it is easier to be accepted by teenagers. For example, extension workers associate the concept of *siri'* with the importance of maintaining self-respect and family by refraining from behaviors that can lead to early marriage. This cultural approach has proven to be effective because students feel that the message conveyed is familiar with their daily lives. This reinforces the theory of intercultural communication that the effectiveness of messages will increase when they are delivered in a social and cultural context that is understood by the audience.

In addition to the individual communication skills of extension workers, the success of the BRUS program at SMK Negeri 2 Barru is also inseparable from the good collaboration between religious extension workers, Islamic Religious Education teachers, Guidance and Counseling teachers, and school principals. This synergy between parties creates a complementary coaching ecosystem. PAI teachers support from the academic and religious side, BK teachers provide psychological assistance, while school principals provide space and administrative support for the implementation of BRUS activities. This collaboration forms an environment conducive to the spiritual and moral development of students. Thus, communication of religious extension workers does not run alone, but becomes part of a broader educational communication system in the school environment.

Findings in the field also show positive changes in students' attitudes and thinking after participating in the BRUS program. Before participating in the activity, some students have a permissive view of early marriage, considering it as something natural and even romantic. However, after receiving guidance, this view changed to be more rational and responsible. They begin to understand that marriage is not only a matter of love, but also mental, spiritual, and economic readiness. Many students claim to be more focused on education and aspire to continue their studies to a higher level. This shows that communication carried out by extension workers is not only informative, but also transformative.

However, in its implementation there are a number of challenges faced by religious extension workers. One of the main obstacles is time constraints, as extension workers have to divide their attention with various tasks outside of school. In addition, limited facilities and digital media are also obstacles in reaching students more widely. In the midst of the era of digitalization, there is still little use of online media to support the *da'wah* messages conveyed through BRUS. In fact, the younger generation today interacts more in the digital world. Thus, the development of extension workers' communication competencies towards the digitization of *da'wah* is an urgent need so that moral messages are more relevant to the context of the times.

Factors outside the school environment also affect the effectiveness of extension workers' communication. Some students are still exposed to social values from the media and the family environment that are not always in line with religious teachings. In this condition, extension workers must have adaptive communication skills to understand students' social realities without judgment, while providing constructive value alternatives. Therefore, the ability to communicate empathetically and actively listen is a key skill for counselors in assisting adolescents to face their moral and social dilemmas.

Conceptually, the results of this study strengthen the theory that interpersonal and cultural communication competencies are the core of the success of *da'wah* communication. Extension workers who are able to understand the audience, master the message, and adapt the communication style to the social context will be more successful in instilling religious values. Effective communication is not just about getting the message across, but how it can change the attitudes and behaviors of the target. In this context, religious extension workers play the role of agents of social change that instill the value of responsibility and moral awareness in the younger generation.

This research also has important practical implications. For the Ministry of Religious Affairs, this result can be the basis for strengthening extension communication competency training, especially in facing the challenges of the digital generation. For the school, BRUS activities can be used as a model of collaboration for character education based on religious values. The integration between spiritual guidance and adolescent counseling is able to create a comprehensive coaching approach, which not only reduces the rate of early marriage, but also forms the character of adolescents who are moral, intelligent, and responsible.

Thus, the communication competence of Islamic religious extension workers has proven to have a great contribution in changing the perspective and behavior of adolescents towards early marriage. Through persuasive, empathetic, and contextual communication, extension workers succeed in instilling religious values that live in students' consciousness. The BRUS program at SMK Negeri 2 Barru is a clear example of how synergy between religious extension workers and educational institutions can produce efforts to prevent early marriage that are sustainable, based on Islamic values, and in accordance with the needs of today's adolescents.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the communication competence of Islamic religious extension workers plays an important role in efforts to prevent early marriage through the School-Age Youth Guidance (BRUS) program at SMK Negeri 2 Barru. Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation conducted in June–July 2025, several main conclusions were reached as follows:

The communication competence of Islamic religious extension workers includes personal, professional, and cultural aspects.

Personal competence can be seen from an empathetic, patient, and open attitude towards students. Extension workers play the role not only as speakers, but also as listeners and discussion partners for adolescents.

Professional competence is reflected in the ability of extension workers to compile and deliver da'wah materials that are relevant, logical, and contextual to students' lives.

Cultural competence is manifested through the use of local Bugis values such as siri' (self-esteem) and pesse (empathy) in conveying moral messages about responsibility and maturity before marriage.

The communication strategy used by religious extension workers is effective in building adolescent awareness to postpone early marriage.

The approach used is persuasive-educational, communicative, and participatory. Counselors do not scare, but invite students to understand the consequences and responsibilities of marriage through dialogues, case studies, and inspirational videos.

The collaboration between religious extension workers, PAI teachers, BK teachers, and the school creates a strong preventive synergy.

BK teachers help in identifying students who are at risk of early marriage, while PAI teachers strengthen moral education in the classroom. The principal provides policy support so that BRUS activities become part of the school culture.

The positive impact of the BRUS program can be seen from the increased understanding of students about

religious maturity, self-control over promiscuity, and decreased intention to marry at a young age. BRUS activities also foster a community of Islamic teenagers in the school environment, which serves as a forum for character development and spiritual development.

The BRUS program is an effective model of religious-based non-formal education in schools.

Through humanistic and contextual communication, Islamic religious extension workers not only transfer knowledge, but also instill deep moral awareness. This model is relevant to be developed in other schools in Indonesia, especially in areas with a high prevalence of early marriage.

Thus, it can be concluded that the communication competence of Islamic religious extension workers is a key factor in the success of the BRUS program in forming a generation of teenagers who have faith, morals, and responsibility for their future. The approach taken is not judgmental, but guides with compassion and rationality of liberating religious values.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study have significant theoretical implications for the development of the study of da'wah communication and Islamic education. This study emphasizes that the communication competence of religious extension workers is an integral dimension of the effectiveness of da'wah in the educational environment. Da'wah communication is no longer only understood as a process of conveying religious messages, but also as a social interaction that facilitates changes in moral awareness and individual behavior. In this context, religious extension workers not only play the role of conveying religious information, but also as facilitators of value learning and social mediators who bridge the gap between religious teachings and the reality of adolescent life.

The practical implication is the need to reorient the training of religious extension workers under the Ministry of Religion to further emphasize aspects of interpersonal communication, adolescent counseling, and digital literacy. Training modules that only focus on textual da'wah materials need to be expanded with aspects of communication psychology, cultural approaches, and ethical persuasion techniques. This capacity strengthening will make religious extension workers more adaptive to the challenges of the times, and be able to become role models for adolescents in instilling the values of self-purity and social responsibility.

This research also implies the importance of integration between da'wah and formal education. Schools under the guidance of the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religion need to open a wider space for non-formal religious guidance activities such as BRUS. The integration will not only strengthen the spiritual dimension of students, but also become an effective moral fortress in dealing with the value crisis due to the influence of popular culture and social media. The BRUS program, which is based on humanist and cultural communication, has proven to be able to internalize religious values subtly and continuously, without coercion, but form a deep awareness.

LIMITATIONS

This study is limited to a study on the communication competence of Islamic religious extension workers in preventing early marriage through the School-Age Youth Guidance (BRUS) program at SMK Negeri 2 Barru. The main focus of the research lies in the interpersonal, empathetic, and persuasive communication aspects used by extension workers in adolescent development.

The research was conducted in only one location with a implementation time of June–July 2025, so the results reflect the conditions in that period. Data was obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation of school principals, PAI teachers, BK teachers, Islamic religious counselors, and students.

Other aspects such as family influence, social media, and economic factors are not discussed in depth because they are outside the scope of the study. Therefore, the results of this study are contextual and cannot be generalized to other educational environments with different characteristics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the research and discussion that has been described, it can be emphasized that the success of the School-Age Youth Guidance (BRUS) program at SMK Negeri 2 Barru does not only depend on da'wah materials or guidance activities alone, but is highly determined by the communication competence of Islamic religious extension workers in carrying out their roles. Therefore, the main recommendations of this study are directed at efforts to improve the quality of extension communication, strengthen cross-institutional collaboration, and develop a youth development model based on local religious and cultural values.

First, Islamic religious extension workers need to continue to develop interpersonal, empathetic, and contextual communication competencies. In dealing with the young generation who live in the midst of digital information flows, extension workers are required to be able to adjust their communication style to be more dialogical, participatory, and relevant to the world of teenagers. Da'wah communication training oriented to Generation Z needs to be increased by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, so that extension workers have skills in using social media, educational videos, and digital platforms as a means of guidance and da'wah. In this way, moral messages about the dangers of early marriage can reach adolescents more widely and sustainably.

Second, the success of da'wah communication in preventing early marriage requires synergy between religious extension workers, schools, and families. Schools need to place BRUS activities as an integral part of students' character education, not just an additional activity. Islamic Religious Education teachers and Counseling Guidance teachers need to collaborate in developing sustainable youth development programs, where religious counselors are the main resource persons from spiritual and moral aspects. Meanwhile, the family must be involved in mentoring activities so that the values conveyed at school can be strengthened in the home environment. The tricentral approach of education—schools, families, and communities—needs to be revived in an effort to build a collective awareness to reject the practice of early marriage.

Third, the local government and the Ministry of Religion are advised to make the BRUS communication model at SMK Negeri 2 Barru a good practice that can be replicated in other schools. With good documentation and continuous evaluation, this program can be a national inspiration in strengthening the development of adolescents based on Islamic values. The Ministry of Religious Affairs can also develop national guidelines on preventive da'wah communication that are oriented towards preventing risky behaviors among students, such as early marriage, juvenile delinquency, and technology abuse.

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