

PERSUASIVE-PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF WORSHIP PRACTICES: THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN A LOCAL MUSLIM COMMUNITY

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Abstract

This study investigates the communication model employed by religious leaders to sustain consistent worship practices among community members in Sekerak Subdistrict, Aceh Tamiang Regency, Indonesia. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the study explores communication patterns, message-delivery strategies, congregational responses, and factors shaping the effectiveness of religious guidance. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with religious leaders, mosque and prayer-room administrators, community figures, and active congregants, complemented by direct observation and documentation. Data were analyzed using an interactive process of reduction, display, and conclusion drawing, with credibility ensured through source and methodological triangulation. The findings reveal an integrated persuasive-participatory communication model combining interpersonal, emotional, dialogical, and exemplary approaches. Two-way communication was particularly salient, enabling congregants to raise questions, express concerns, and discuss barriers to worship. Religious leaders reinforced commitment through accessible language, gentle persuasion, repeated motivational messages, personal engagement, emotional support, and role modelling. Effectiveness was strengthened by leader credibility, family involvement, supportive religious environments, and face-to-face interaction, but constrained by work and economic pressures, health conditions, weak spiritual motivation, social influences, and limited use of digital media. The study concludes that persuasive-participatory communication grounded in interpersonal closeness and exemplary conduct can strengthen spiritual awareness, worship discipline, and continuity. The findings extend persuasive-participatory communication as a framework for understanding sustained religious practice and highlight the need for dialogical guidance, stronger family and institutional involvement, and context-appropriate digital strategies.

Keywords: religious leaders, religious communication, communication model, consistency of worship, Sekerak Subdistrict

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This study highlights how religious leaders can help communities maintain consistent worship practices through communication that is persuasive, participatory, personal, and grounded in exemplary conduct. Rather than relying only on formal sermons or one-way instruction, effective religious guidance involves dialogue, emotional support, gentle persuasion, personal engagement, and credible role modelling. These approaches allow community members to express their difficulties, receive guidance suited to their circumstances, and develop stronger spiritual awareness and commitment to worship. The findings are relevant not only to religious leaders but also to families, mosque administrators, community organizations, and policymakers concerned with strengthening community-based religious life. The study also shows that family support, a supportive religious environment, and face-to-face interaction reinforce religious participation, while work demands, economic pressures, health conditions, limited spiritual motivation, and restricted use of digital media can reduce engagement. These insights suggest that religious guidance programs should combine interpersonal communication with appropriate digital platforms to make religious support more accessible, inclusive, and responsive to contemporary community needs.

INTRODUCTION

Communication plays a crucial role in fostering the religious life of a community. In a religious society, religious leaders function not only as conveyors of religious teachings but also as central figures who cultivate awareness, exemplify appropriate conduct, and encourage discipline among community members in performing acts of worship. Through effective communication, religious messages can be received, understood, and internalized into the community's everyday behavior (Artin, 2022). Consistency in worship practices is an important indicator for assessing the success of religious guidance within a community. Worship performed regularly and continuously not only reflects the quality of an individual's faith but also indicates that the process of religious development is functioning effectively. In practice, however, maintaining consistency in worship is not an easy task because it is influenced by various internal and external factors, including demanding daily activities, a lack of spiritual motivation, and the influence of the social environment (Maihani et al., 2024).

Religious leaders occupy a strategic position in addressing the spiritual needs of the community through appropriate communication approaches. In carrying out this role, religious leaders are expected to select communication models that correspond to the characteristics of their congregants, the local sociocultural context, and contemporary developments. The communication model employed determines the extent to which religious messages can influence the community's awareness and worship-related behavior (Saryono et al., 2022). In Sekerak Subdistrict, religious leaders are among the key actors responsible for sustaining the community's worship practices. Their involvement in religious activities, such as Islamic study gatherings, religious lectures, sermons, and regular religious guidance, makes a significant contribution to shaping the religious behavior of congregants. In this context, religious communication is understood not merely as the transmission of information but also as an effort to establish emotional, social, and spiritual relationships between religious leaders and the community.

The effectiveness of religious communication is strongly influenced by the leaders' ability to apply persuasive, dialogical, and contextual communication patterns. One-way communication tends to be less effective in fostering congregational participation and awareness. In contrast, communication that provides opportunities for interaction and mutual understanding is more likely to facilitate the sustainable internalization of religious values and worship practices (Suwarno et al., 2020). Furthermore, the development of modern society presents distinct challenges for religious leaders in maintaining the community's consistency in worship. Changes in lifestyle, economic demands, and the rapid flow of digital information may affect the priorities and attention that community members devote to religious activities. Religious leaders must therefore develop adaptive communication strategies to remain relevant and responsive to the spiritual needs of the community (Maulana et al., 2024).

The communication models applied by religious leaders are also inseparable from the personal example they demonstrate in their daily lives. Exemplary conduct constitutes a powerful form of nonverbal communication that can significantly influence congregational behavior. Community members tend to be more receptive to teachings conveyed by figures whose words are consistent with their actions (Prihandono & Amir, 2024). Research on the communication models employed by religious leaders to maintain consistency in worship is important because it can provide a deeper understanding of religious guidance processes at the local level. In addition, such research can identify the most effective communication models for strengthening discipline in the community's worship practices. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for developing more contextual approaches to Islamic propagation and religious communication.

Sekerak Subdistrict, as the research setting, possesses distinctive socioreligious characteristics that make it particularly relevant for investigation. Social interactions within the community remain closely associated with the values of solidarity and togetherness, allowing religious leaders to exert considerable influence on everyday life. In this context, religious communication conducted by religious leaders has the potential to serve as an important instrument for maintaining the continuity of the community's worship practices. Based on the foregoing discussion, this study focuses on the communication models employed by religious leaders to maintain consistency in worship practices in Sekerak Subdistrict. It seeks to explain the forms of communication used, the factors influencing their effectiveness, and their contribution to shaping the community's worship-related behavior. Thus, this study is expected to make both academic and practical contributions to the development of religious communication studies.

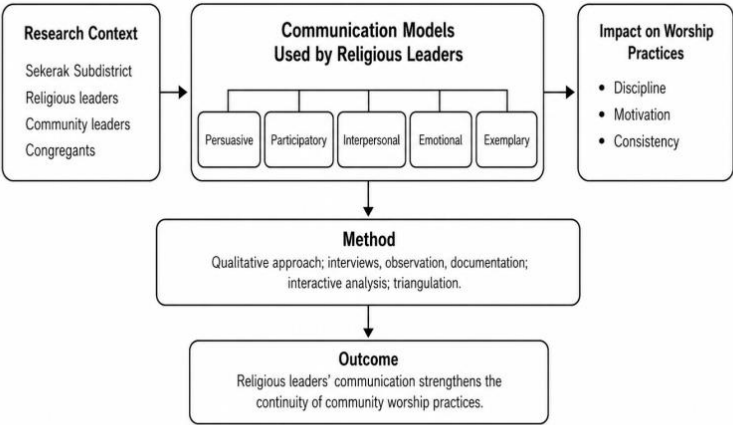
METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the communication models used by religious leaders to maintain consistency in the community's worship practices. This approach enabled the researcher to explore meanings, patterns of interaction, message-delivery strategies, and congregational responses directly within the research setting. The study was conducted in Sekerak Subdistrict, involving religious leaders, community leaders, and congregants who actively participated in religious activities as research participants.

The data used in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with religious leaders, mosque and prayer-room administrators, and selected congregants. These interviews were complemented by direct observations of ongoing religious activities. Secondary data were obtained from relevant documents, including records of worship activities, archives of religious programs, photographs of religious events, and related academic literature. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation to ensure that the findings were comprehensive and mutually reinforcing.

The data were analyzed using an interactive analysis model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The trustworthiness of the data was established through source triangulation and methodological triangulation to ensure the validity, credibility, and consistency of the information obtained. Through this methodology, the study sought to explain how the communication models employed by religious leaders influenced the discipline, motivation, and continuity of worship practices among community members in Sekerak Subdistrict.

Figure 1.
Conceptual framework of religious leaders' communication models in strengthening the consistency of community worship practices.



RESULT

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, this study found that religious leaders in Sekerak Subdistrict, Aceh Tamiang Regency, play a highly significant role in maintaining the consistency of the community's worship practices. Religious leaders are perceived not only as individuals who deliver religious lectures, sermons, and teachings, but also as spiritual advisers, motivators, and role models in everyday life. Their presence provides community members with a sense of being cared for and guided, particularly when dealing with various issues related to their religious lives. Community members tend to accept and follow the teachings conveyed by religious leaders because they consider them to possess adequate religious knowledge, experience, integrity, and exemplary conduct.

The findings indicate that the communication employed by religious leaders to maintain consistency in worship involves a combination of two-way communication, persuasive communication, interpersonal communication, emotional communication, and communication through exemplary conduct. Collectively, these patterns constitute a communication model that is open, participatory, humane, and continuous. Religious leaders do not merely convey messages to congregants; they also listen to their responses, understand their circumstances, provide concrete examples, and offer direct guidance.

In delivering religious messages, religious leaders use simple, clear, and easily understood language that is accessible to different groups within the community. The language is not excessively formal and is adapted to the age, level of understanding, and social conditions of the congregants. Messages are delivered in a gentle, polite, and respectful tone so that they do not appear patronizing or coercive. This manner of communication makes community members feel comfortable when listening to religious lectures, sermons, and advice. Religious messages are also easier to understand because religious teachings are frequently associated with the experiences and problems encountered by community members in their daily lives.

The most prominent communication model identified in this study is two-way communication. During religious study gatherings, religious discussions, community meetings, and conversations following congregational worship, congregants are given opportunities to ask questions, express opinions, and explain the difficulties they experience in performing religious practices. Congregants are not positioned merely as passive recipients of messages but are actively involved in the communication process. The opportunity to provide responses creates a more open and familiar communication atmosphere between religious leaders and community members. Through such dialogue, religious leaders can directly identify the needs, levels of understanding, and problems experienced by congregants. Information obtained from the congregants is then used to adjust the content, language, and delivery of religious messages. Therefore, communication does not end with the transmission of religious teachings but develops into a process of exchanging messages and establishing mutual understanding between religious leaders and the community. The increasingly close relationship also enables congregants to be more open in expressing both religious and personal problems that affect their consistency in worship.

Religious leaders also employ a persuasive approach by prioritizing gentle and non-coercive invitations. Community members are not merely reminded of their obligation to perform acts of worship but are also provided with explanations regarding their spiritual benefits, the peace of mind they offer, and the importance of maintaining a relationship with Allah. The messages conveyed are primarily intended to foster internal awareness among congregants rather than to create compliance through pressure. This approach enables community members to perceive worship as an activity performed on the basis of personal awareness and spiritual need rather than merely because of fear of criticism or social judgment. In addition to verbal communication, religious leaders communicate through exemplary conduct. Such exemplary conduct is evident in their discipline in attending congregational prayers, active participation in religious activities, willingness to assist community members, and ability to maintain appropriate behavior in social interactions. Religious leaders endeavor to be the first to practise the teachings they convey to congregants. Consistency between their

words and actions strengthens the community's trust in the religious messages they communicate.

Community members tend to follow concrete behavior demonstrated by religious leaders more easily than they follow verbal advice alone. The presence of religious leaders at congregational prayers and socioreligious activities serves as an indirect reminder for community members to participate. Their behavior therefore functions as a nonverbal message that strongly influences the formation of congregants' worship habits. Exemplary conduct also reinforces the position of religious leaders as respected and trusted figures within the community. To maintain consistency in worship, religious leaders regularly communicate motivational messages to the community. These messages encourage community members to maintain their prayers, recite the Qur'an, attend religious study gatherings, participate in religious activities, and increase their acts of worship. The messages are delivered not only during formal religious activities but also through conversations after prayer, community meetings, home visits, and everyday interactions.

Messages are repeatedly delivered because religious leaders recognize that consistent worship habits cannot be established within a short period. Not all congregants immediately implement a message after hearing it only once. Religious leaders therefore continue to provide reminders, motivation, and guidance through various methods. Repetition helps community members remember their religious obligations and strengthens their awareness of the importance of performing worship regularly. An emotional approach was also identified in the communication practices of religious leaders. They do not merely communicate religious rules, obligations, and prohibitions but also seek to understand the emotional conditions and personal circumstances of congregants. When community members experience economic difficulties, family problems, health issues, or other challenges, religious leaders provide advice patiently and empathetically. Community members are encouraged to remain hopeful, exercise patience, and continue performing acts of worship despite the difficulties they face.

This attentive form of communication makes community members feel respected, heard, and free from judgment. Such feelings encourage congregants to be more open in discussing the problems they encounter. The emotional closeness that develops also makes the advice of religious leaders more acceptable. Congregants respond more positively to religious leaders who are friendly, patient, communicative, and understanding of their circumstances than to messages delivered in a harsh manner. This study also found that religious leaders use a personal approach when communicating with community members who have become less active in worship or religious activities. Religious leaders visit congregants' homes, engage them in informal conversations, and provide direct motivation. This personal approach is employed to prevent community members from feeling embarrassed or being publicly reprimanded in front of others. Through private conversations, religious leaders can gain a deeper understanding of the reasons for the decline in congregants' participation.

The reasons for declining participation in worship vary and include work commitments, health conditions, family problems, weak spiritual motivation, and the influence of social environments. After identifying the problems experienced by individual congregants, religious leaders provide guidance and possible solutions that are adapted to their respective circumstances. This personal approach can build trust, strengthen relationships, and restore community members' motivation to participate in religious activities.

The communication media used by religious leaders continue to be dominated by face-to-face interaction. Religious lectures at mosques, sermons, regular religious study gatherings, religious discussions, home visits, community meetings, and informal conversations constitute the primary channels through which religious messages are communicated. The use of digital media in religious guidance remains limited. Nevertheless, face-to-face communication is considered effective because the social relationships between religious leaders and the community remain strong. Community members place greater trust in messages delivered directly by figures whom they know personally. Face-to-face interaction also enables religious leaders to observe congregants' expressions, identify their responses, and provide immediate clarification when questions or misunderstandings arise. The communication process consequently becomes more dynamic because congregants can respond directly to the messages conveyed.

The success of religious leaders' communication is also supported by families and the community's social environment. In families whose members regularly remind one another to pray, recite the Qur'an, and attend religious activities, messages conveyed by religious leaders are more easily implemented. Parents who demonstrate appropriate worship practices to their children also contribute to the formation of religious habits from an early age. Conversely, inadequate family support may prevent religious messages from being translated into everyday practices. The social environment of Sekerak Subdistrict, which continues to uphold communal values and a religious atmosphere, also supports the community's consistency in worship. The presence of mosques, prayer rooms, religious study gatherings, Islamic learning groups, and socioreligious activities creates an environment that encourages community members to perform worship collectively. Religious activities conducted collectively reinforce the messages conveyed by religious leaders and position worship as an integral part of the community's social life.

Nevertheless, religious leaders face several obstacles in maintaining the community's consistency in worship. These obstacles include work commitments, economic demands, limited religious awareness among some community members, age and health conditions, and the influence of social relationships. Some community members find it difficult to regularly attend congregational worship and religious study gatherings because much of their time is devoted to work. Others have not yet developed sufficient motivation to maintain continuous worship practices. The limited use of communication media also presents an obstacle to reaching community members who rarely attend religious activities in person. Reliance on face-to-face communication means that religious messages cannot yet fully reach congregants whose commitments or physical limitations prevent them from attending. Despite these obstacles, religious leaders continue to address them through patient guidance, repeated messages, personal visits, and the adaptation of communication methods to the community's circumstances.

Based on the overall findings, the communication model employed by religious leaders to maintain consistency in worship in Sekerak Subdistrict can be formulated as a model of religious communication that is persuasive, participatory, interpersonal, and grounded in exemplary conduct. This model is characterized by simple language, gentle invitations, open dialogue, emotional engagement, personal guidance, repeated message delivery, and the demonstration of concrete examples in everyday life. The communication process does not

operate in a linear or one-way manner. Religious leaders communicate messages through lectures, sermons, religious study gatherings, informal conversations, home visits, and exemplary behavior. Community members subsequently provide feedback through questions, opinions, participation in religious activities, and changes in worship-related behavior. Their responses are then used by religious leaders to adjust subsequent messages and guidance strategies.

The findings demonstrate that the success of religious leaders in maintaining consistency in worship does not depend solely on the religious content communicated. It is also determined by the leaders' credibility, the manner in which messages are delivered, openness to feedback, emotional closeness, consistency in demonstrating exemplary behavior, and continuity in religious guidance. Support from families and the social environment further strengthens the acceptance and application of religious messages in the everyday lives of the people of Sekerak Subdistrict. The findings demonstrate that religious leaders in Sekerak Subdistrict employ an integrated communication model to maintain the consistency of community worship practices. This model combines two-way, persuasive, interpersonal, emotional, and exemplary communication. Its effectiveness is supported by the credibility of religious leaders, family involvement, a religious social environment, and continuous face-to-face interaction. However, several factors, including work commitments, economic demands, health conditions, limited spiritual awareness, and the restricted use of digital media, may hinder the communication process. The relationship among these components is presented in Figure 2

Figure 2.
The Communication Model of Religious Leaders in Maintaining the Consistency of Worship Practices in Sekerak Subdistrict, Aceh Tamiang Regency

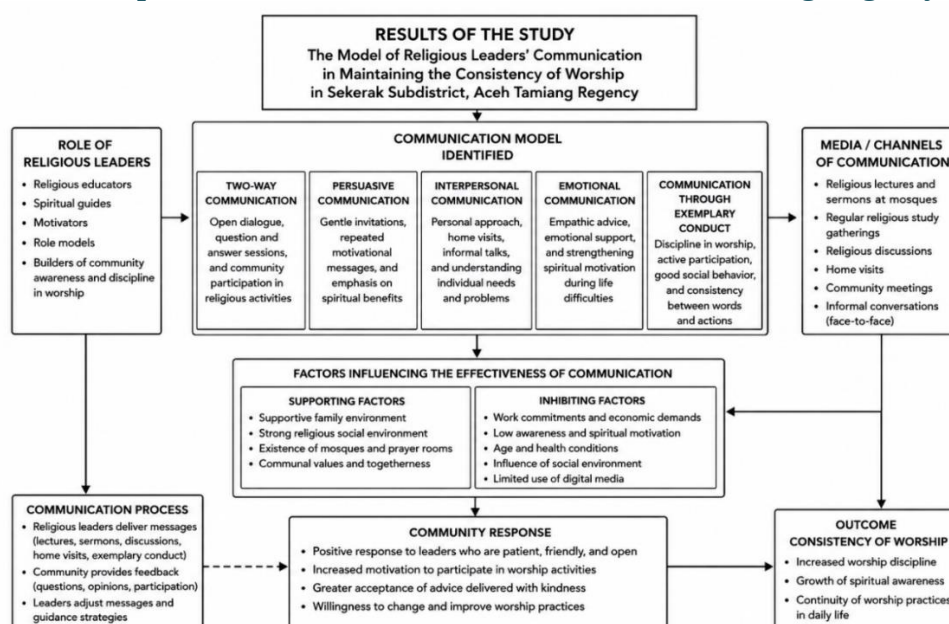


Figure 2 illustrates that religious leaders serve as religious educators, spiritual guides, motivators, and role models within the community. Their religious messages are communicated

through sermons, religious study gatherings, discussions, home visits, community meetings, and informal conversations. The communication process is interactive because community members provide feedback through questions, opinions, participation, and changes in worship-related behavior. Religious leaders subsequently use this feedback to adapt their messages and guidance strategies. The interaction between communication models, communication channels, supporting and inhibiting factors, and community responses ultimately contributes to increased worship discipline, stronger spiritual awareness, and the continuity of worship practices in daily life.

DISCUSS

Persuasive and Two-Way Communication as the Core of Religious Guidance

The findings reveal that persuasive and two-way communication constitute the most prominent communication patterns employed by religious leaders in Sekerak Subdistrict. Religious messages are conveyed through simple, polite, and easily understood language. Rather than compelling congregants to perform religious obligations, religious leaders use gentle invitations, spiritual motivation, and explanations of the personal and social benefits of worship. This approach encourages congregants to perform worship on the basis of awareness and personal commitment rather than external pressure.

The persuasive approach used by religious leaders is consistent with the argument of Indriani et al. (2024), who explain that non-coercive communication can foster internal awareness and encourage individuals to undertake religious practices voluntarily. Persuasive communication is therefore not merely intended to produce immediate compliance but also to develop a deeper understanding of worship as a spiritual need. The findings also show that religious leaders provide opportunities for congregants to ask questions, express opinions, and communicate the difficulties they experience in performing worship. This pattern demonstrates that religious communication in Sekerak Subdistrict does not operate exclusively through a linear or one-way process. Instead, religious leaders and congregants alternately assume the roles of message sender and receiver.

This finding is supported by Nadiyah Permitasari (2019), who emphasizes that effective religious communication requires the communicator not only to deliver messages but also to listen and respond to the needs of the community. Open dialogue allows religious leaders to understand the actual circumstances of congregants and adapt their messages accordingly. The combination of persuasive and two-way communication creates a participatory model of religious guidance. Congregants are not positioned as passive recipients of religious teachings but as active participants in constructing religious understanding. Through dialogue and gentle persuasion, religious leaders can strengthen congregants' acceptance of religious messages and encourage the consistent performance of worship.

Exemplary Conduct and Interpersonal Closeness as Sources of Religious Influence

Another important finding is that the influence of religious leaders is not derived solely from verbal messages. Their everyday conduct also functions as a powerful form of nonverbal communication. Religious leaders demonstrate discipline in attending congregational prayers, actively participate in religious activities, maintain appropriate social behavior, and assist community members when necessary. The consistency between religious teachings and the

personal conduct of religious leaders strengthens their credibility. Congregants are more likely to accept religious advice when the communicator demonstrates the values conveyed in the message. Astuti and Triayunda (2023) similarly explain that people tend to imitate concrete behavior more readily than they respond to verbal advice alone. Exemplary behavior therefore becomes an essential element of sustainable religious guidance.

The importance of exemplary conduct is also associated with the moral legitimacy of religious leaders. Leaders who consistently perform worship and maintain good social relations are regarded as trustworthy religious figures. Basofi and Fatmawati (2023) argue that exemplary conduct strengthens communicator credibility because it demonstrates consistency between religious messages and actual behavior. In addition to exemplary conduct, the findings identify interpersonal and emotional closeness as important dimensions of the communication model. Religious leaders communicate personally with congregants, visit their homes, engage in informal conversations, and provide advice that reflects their individual circumstances. Such communication enables leaders to identify personal obstacles to worship, including occupational demands, family problems, health conditions, and declining spiritual motivation.

Interpersonal closeness creates a relationship characterized by trust, openness, and mutual respect. Congregants are more willing to discuss their problems when they feel that religious leaders listen without judging them. Khairun et al. (2025) state that emotional closeness can reduce the psychological distance between religious leaders and congregants, thereby making religious messages more acceptable. The use of patient, empathetic, and reassuring communication also strengthens the spiritual motivation of congregants. This supports the explanation of Mufrida et al. (2025), who note that religious communication does not merely transmit information but can also generate spiritual energy, strengthen commitment, and encourage consistency in worship.

Family, Religious Environment, and Communication Channels as Contextual Factors

The effectiveness of religious leaders' communication is influenced by the social context in which religious messages are received. The findings show that family involvement plays an important role in reinforcing messages delivered by religious leaders. Congregants who live in families whose members remind one another to pray, recite the Qur'an, and participate in religious activities tend to demonstrate greater consistency in worship. The family functions as the immediate environment in which religious teachings are translated into daily practices. Messages delivered through sermons or religious study gatherings become more meaningful when they are reinforced through parental example and regular family encouragement. Conversely, inadequate family support may weaken the implementation of religious messages, even when congregants understand the teachings intellectually.

The religious social environment of Sekerak Subdistrict also supports the continuity of worship practices. The availability of mosques, prayer rooms, religious study gatherings, sermons, and collective religious activities creates an atmosphere in which worship is regarded as part of community life. Artin (2022) emphasizes that a religious social environment can strengthen the internalization of religious values because collective activities reinforce the messages delivered by religious leaders. Social closeness between religious leaders and the community further contributes to communication effectiveness. Messages conveyed in a familiar and trustworthy relationship are more readily accepted than messages communicated

within a distant or highly formal relationship. Effendi, Harahap, et al. (2023) explain that emotional closeness reduces the psychological distance between communicators and audiences and supports the acceptance of religious messages.

The findings nevertheless show that communication channels remain dominated by face-to-face interaction, including religious lectures, sermons, study gatherings, home visits, community meetings, and informal conversations. These channels are effective because they allow immediate feedback and enable religious leaders to observe congregants' verbal and nonverbal responses. However, limited use of digital media restricts the ability of religious leaders to reach people who cannot regularly attend religious activities. Nasution and Triadi (2025) indicate that religious communication relying exclusively on face-to-face lectures may have limited reach, particularly among audiences affected by occupational demands, geographical constraints, or changing communication habits. They therefore emphasize the importance of aligning communication methods and media with audience characteristics. These findings indicate that face-to-face communication should remain an important religious communication channel in Sekerak Subdistrict, while digital platforms may be used as supplementary media. Digital communication should not replace interpersonal interaction but should extend the reach and continuity of religious guidance.

Religious Communication and the Sustainability of Worship Practices

The findings demonstrate that religious leaders' communication contributes to increased awareness, motivation, discipline, and continuity in the community's worship practices. Religious leaders repeatedly communicate the importance of prayer, Qur'anic recitation, participation in religious gatherings, and other forms of worship. The repetition of these messages functions as continuous reinforcement that helps congregants develop more stable religious habits. Sandra and Dewi (2019) explain that behavioral changes in worship cannot be achieved instantly but require repeated and continuous religious guidance. Regular lectures, study gatherings, visits, and informal interactions reinforce religious messages and gradually transform them into habitual practices.

Communication performed by religious leaders also has an educational function. It assists congregants in understanding not only the formal obligations of worship but also its spiritual and social significance. Prihandono and Amir (2024) argue that religious leaders serve as moral educators who connect religious values with everyday experiences. Through this process, worship can develop from a formal routine into a consciously recognized spiritual need. The findings nevertheless indicate that communication does not always produce immediate behavioral change. Work commitments, economic demands, limited religious awareness, age, health conditions, and social influences may reduce participation in congregational worship and other religious activities. Ivan et al. (2024) explain that the reception of religious messages is influenced by the social and psychological readiness of the audience. Therefore, religious leaders need to adapt their communication to congregants' different circumstances and levels of readiness.

The communication model identified in this study can consequently be understood as a continuous process of religious internalization. Messages are communicated repeatedly, interpreted through dialogue, reinforced by exemplary conduct, and applied through family and community support. Rahmadiana and Lestarini (2025) describe this process as the

internalization of religious values, in which religious messages are not merely understood cognitively but are accepted as principles guiding attitudes and behavior.

The sustainability of worship practices cannot therefore be developed through pressure or one-time religious instruction. It requires patient, contextual, dialogical, and continuous communication. Nurfadillah and Azhar (2021) similarly argue that consistency in worship is more likely to develop through voluntary awareness arising from understanding than through coercion. Overall, the findings affirm that the communication model of religious leaders in Sekerak Subdistrict is persuasive, participatory, interpersonal, and grounded in exemplary conduct. The interaction of these dimensions enables religious leaders to strengthen spiritual awareness, encourage disciplined worship, and maintain the continuity of religious practices within the community.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that religious leaders in Sekerak Subdistrict, Aceh Tamiang Regency, play a strategic role in sustaining the consistency of community worship practices through a communication model that is persuasive, participatory, interpersonal, emotional, and grounded in exemplary conduct. Their role extends beyond the transmission of religious teachings to include spiritual guidance, motivation, moral education, and the provision of behavioral examples. The effectiveness of this communication is reinforced by the leaders' credibility, personal integrity, religious knowledge, and consistency between verbal messages and daily conduct. Two-way communication enables congregants to ask questions, express opinions, and communicate the difficulties they encounter in practicing worship, while interpersonal and emotional approaches strengthen trust, closeness, and openness. Exemplary conduct also emerges as a particularly influential form of nonverbal communication, as religious leaders who consistently participate in congregational prayers, religious gatherings, and community activities provide concrete models that encourage worship discipline and continuity. These findings imply that religious guidance should prioritize continuous, dialogical, contextual, and compassionate communication rather than relying solely on formal or one-directional religious instruction. They also suggest the importance of strengthening family involvement, community-based religious activities, and the integration of appropriate digital communication channels to complement face-to-face interaction.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. The research was conducted within a single local community in Sekerak Subdistrict and employed a descriptive qualitative design; therefore, the findings are context-specific and cannot be generalized directly to Muslim communities with different social, cultural, economic, or religious characteristics. In addition, the study relied mainly on interviews, observations, and documentation, which may be influenced by participants' subjective perceptions and the researcher's interpretation of social interactions. The limited use of digital religious communication within the research setting also restricted the study's ability to examine how online platforms may shape worship motivation and religious engagement. Future studies may expand the research to multiple communities, employ comparative or mixed-method approaches, and examine the role of digital religious communication in sustaining worship practices. Such studies would provide a broader understanding of how persuasive-

participatory communication and exemplary leadership operate across different community contexts.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization, D.N., A. and E.B.M.; methodology, D.N.; validation, A. and E.B.M.; formal analysis, D.N.; investigation, D.N.; resources, D.N.; data curation, D.N.; writing—original draft preparation, D.N.; writing—review and editing, A. and E.B.M.; visualization, D.N.; supervision, A. and E.B.M.; project administration, D.N. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD STATEMENT

Ethical review and approval were waived for this study because the research employed a descriptive qualitative approach involving interviews, observations, and documentation and did not involve clinical intervention, medical experimentation, or the collection of biological specimens.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT by OpenAI to improve the clarity, grammar, and academic language of the manuscript. After using this tool/service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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