

## Strengthening Islamic Communication Ethics in Premarital Guidance Services at the Muara Sipongi Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) through a Local Cultural Approach

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### Abstract

This study explores the integration of Islamic communication principles with local cultural traditions in premarital guidance at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) Muara Sipongi, Mandailing Natal. The purpose of this research is to analyze how qaulan sadiidan, qaulan layyinan, qaulan kariman, and qaulan balighan are applied in counseling sessions. Using a qualitative approach with a Participatory Action Research (PAR) design, the partners involved were four pairs of prospective brides and grooms, two religious counselors, and the Head of the KUA. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed thematically with triangulation. The results show that the integration of Islamic communication with local traditions such as sumando and manjujur enriched the counseling process and made it more contextual. Participants also demonstrated increased knowledge: initially limited in understanding Islamic communication, after the sessions they could explain and apply the concepts in marital contexts. This study concludes that premarital guidance becomes more effective when Islamic values are combined with cultural wisdom, offering a contextual model for other regions.

### Keywords

Islamic Communication; KUA; Marriage Guidance.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a sacred institution in Islam that aims to form a family that is peaceful, loving, and merciful. However, in practice, a significant number of marriages face serious problems due to poor communication between husband and wife. Based on official data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) released up to early 2025, the number of divorces in Indonesia in 2024 was recorded at 399,921 cases. Divorce rates in Indonesia tend to increase every year, with the main cause being disharmony stemming from poor communication within the household. This confirms the importance of good communication preparation before the wedding takes place.

Muara Sipongi is a multi-ethnic district; besides the Mandailing people, there are also Minang and *Batak Angkola* communities. Muara Sipongi custom, with its characteristic patterns, is the strong persistence of the prohibition against marrying within the same tribe (or clan). This prohibition against marrying within the same clan in the *Ulu* tribe community of Muara Sipongi arose from the belief that people from the same clan are siblings, a belief established when the Muara Sipongi area was not yet as developed as it is today (Ariyani, 2023). In Nadya Ariyan's thesis research, this occurred to prevent disputes in the future if problems arose, such as arguments or divorce, which could lead to conflict between siblings.

Meanwhile, within Batak customs, particularly Mandailing customs which still have ties to Batak Toba customs, divorce is something that is highly avoided, and the process must go through adat ceremonies at Muara Sipongi (Isnaidar et al., 2024). *Hatobangon* in the Mandailing language or *Ninik mamak* in Minang, has a very significant influence in society. All decisions, whether legal, social, religious, or political, must align with the guidance of the *Ninik Mamak* (Afifa et al., 2024), especially in matters of marriage and divorce. The role of the *Ninik Mamak* is crucial for resolving various issues, making them the central figures in society, particularly in preventing divorce.

As the front line in the marriage services for Muslims, the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) plays a strategic role in providing training or guidance to prospective brides and grooms. This training is known as Marriage Guidance, which aims to equip couples with the knowledge, skills, and religious and social principles needed for family life. Through the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance Number 373 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for Marriage Guidance, the government emphasizes the need to integrate Islamic principles into the premarital education process. Through the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance No. 373 of 2017, the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) is required to organize Marriage Guidance that integrates legal aspects, reproductive health, and Islamic moral principles for prospective brides and grooms. Research in Pinrang Regency, for example, shows that is effective in forming *sakinah* family communication because the material aligns with the Islamic framework, thus

emphasizing the importance of principles such as mutual respect and fulfilling the rights and obligations of husband and wife (Syahrial, 2021).

Nevertheless, many KUA (Marriage Registration Offices) face operational constraints such as short implementation time (two days), limited budget, suboptimal participant attendance, and a shortage of professional speakers (Nurhidayati et al., 2021). These obstacles can reduce the quality of conveying the principles of Islamic communication, which are the main foundation for building healthy (*sakinah*) family relationships.

One important aspect that needs to be highlighted in pre-wedding counseling is communication. The importance of communication for humans cannot be denied, and the same goes for an organization. With good communication, an organization can run smoothly and successfully, and vice versa. A lack of or absence of organizational communication can cause the organization to stall or become disorganized (Ritonga, 2018). Communication from an Islamic perspective is not merely a process of conveying information, but also reflects ethics, morals, and spiritual values. The principles of Islamic communication are conveyed through the principle of "*qaulan*," which means the way of speaking. In the context of communication, *qaul* encompasses various types of expressions that have ethical meaning, such as *qaulan sadidan* (true speech), *qaulan balighan* (eloquent speech), *qaulan ma'rufan* (kind speech), *qaulan kariman* (noble speech), and *qaulan layyinan* (gentle speech). Each of these forms of *qaul* teaches the principles of Islamic communication, which prioritize honesty, gentleness, clarity of message, and respect for the listener. Thus, *qaul* is not merely speech, but also serves as a moral foundation in the social interactions and communication of a Muslim, whether in family life, society, or in *da'wah* (Islamic propagation).

Integration essentially comes from the word "integration," which means the unification or merging of different parts into a complete and harmonious whole. In the context of social science, integration is defined as the process of aligning various elements or values within a system to create order and harmony. According to (Soekanto, 2017), integration is the process of adjustment between different elements in community life, resulting in a harmonious way of life. In the context of this research, integration is understood as the process of combining Islamic communication principles such as *qaulan sadiidan*, *balighan*, *kariman*, *layyinan*, *ma'rufan*, and *maysuuran* with the premarital guidance counseling material.

Based on this background, this study aims to deeply examine the integration of Islamic communication principles in pre-wedding guidance organized by the Religious Affairs Office in Muara Sipongi. The main focus of this research is on the form of integrating Islamic communication principles, the communication strategies used, and the supporting and hindering factors in the process. The results of this study are expected to provide practical contributions to the development of more effective marriage guidance methods that are in accordance with Islamic principles.

The previous study for this research was: "Principles of Communication in Pre-Marital Guidance (A Study of Prospective Brides and Grooms in *Ulee Kareng* District, Banda Aceh City)" (Rosmiati, 2021). The main difference lies in the approach and depth of the study: this research emphasizes the internalization of Islamic communication principles based on the Quran.

The research problem for this study is that there has not been much in-depth research on the integration of Islamic communication principles in marriage guidance within specific areas like Muara Sipongi, which has unique cultural and geographical characteristics. Therefore, it is necessary to examine how these principles are applied in the delivery method, communication materials, at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) in Muara Sipongi. The purpose of this research is to analyze how *qaulan sadiidan*, *qaulan layyinan*, *qaulan kariman*, and *qaulan balighan* are applied in counseling sessions.

## **2. METHODS**

This study adopts a Participatory Action Research (PAR) design with a qualitative approach, chosen for its capacity to engage both researchers and local stakeholders actively in the premarital guidance process. The research was carried out at KUA (Office of Religious Affairs) in Muara Sipongi District, Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra, in May 2024. The subjects included the Head of KUA, religious counselors, *penghulu*, four pairs of prospective brides and grooms, and customary leaders, ensuring an inclusive representation of religious and cultural dynamics. This approach is supported by recent findings that highlight the importance of involving key actors in premarital counseling to contextualize Islamic values in local settings (Utari et al., 2022). The research activities comprised four succinct phases: (1) Planning, involving coordination to craft modules embedding Islamic communication principles and local customs; (2) Implementation, including group-based sessions, individual consultations, and interactive simulations such as *River of Life*; (3) Mentoring, delivered over a one-month period with weekly in-person sessions and ongoing WhatsApp support; and (4) Evaluation, using semi-structured interviews, direct observations of communication practices, and pre-post questionnaires to assess knowledge changes. These phases mirror effective premarital guidance frameworks reported in recent studies across Indonesia (Ginting & Purnama, 2023; Nugraheni et al., 2023). Data were gathered through observation, in-depth interviewing, and documentation of training materials and participant feedback. Thematic analysis encompassing data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing was employed to derive meaningful insights. To strengthen reliability, source and method triangulation was utilized. The structure of this methodology aligns with established models found in Indonesian research on premarital guidance, which emphasize referral to robust curriculum development and community involvement (Utari et al., 2022; Nugraheni et al., 2023).

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The partners in this study were directly related to the premarital guidance program at the Muara Sipongi Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). They consisted of four pairs of prospective brides and grooms who participated in the premarital counseling sessions during May 2024, two religious counselors who facilitated the sessions, and the Head of the KUA who coordinated and supervised the overall implementation of the program. The prospective couples acted as the main beneficiaries of the program, while the counselors served as facilitators delivering Islamic communication principles, and the Head of the KUA ensured the organizational and administrative support for the activities. This role distribution is consistent with findings from previous studies which emphasized that the success of premarital guidance depends on the active involvement of prospective couples and the structured facilitation by KUA officials (Utari, Fitriyani, & Nurdin, 2022; Nugraheni, Hidayati, & Putri, 2023).

Based on the interview results, Mr. Fahrur Rozi, as the head of the Muara Sipongi KUA, explained that the premarital guidance provided by the Muara Sipongi KUA has tangibly integrated Islamic communication principles, both in terms of methods, materials, and approaches. Based on the interview results, the guidance is implemented through two methods: (1) self-guidance, which is done individually according to the prospective bride and groom's arrival schedule to the KUA; and (2) group face-to-face guidance, if the number of participants is sufficient. Both refer to the official modules from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which already contain Islamic principles based on the Quran and Hadith (Interview, May 19, 2025).

Islamic communication material is explicitly presented through the citation of verses from the Quran, based on interviews, including: QS. An-Nisa: 1 – regarding equality and the origin of men and women from a single soul, QS. An-Nisa: 21 – concerning the strong bond of marriage (*mitsaqan ghalizha*), QS. Al-Baqarah: 187 – about the relationship between husband and wife as clothing for each other, QS. Ar-Rum: 21 – as a reinforcement of the value of compassion in marriage.

In its implementation, the counselor refer to the official modules from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and insert verses from the Quran as guidelines for marriage communication. Some of the verses used include (Interview, May 19, 2025) :

QS. *An-Nisa: 1*, in this verse confirms that Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) and Eve were not created through a process of biological evolution like other living beings, but were created specifically on their own, and then their partners were created from them. The mechanism cannot be explained scientifically. Then, their children were born through a biological process in pairs according to His will. This verse serves as the basis for conveying the values of equality and mutual respect in the relationship between husband and wife.

QS. *An-Nisa: 21*, in this verse emphasizes that the marriage bond is a sacred and weighty one, not merely a physical or administrative.

QS. *Al-Baqarah*: 187, in the meaning of "clothing" reflects its protective function, covering shame, and the emotional closeness between husband and wife.

QS. *Ar-Rum*: 21, in this verse serves as the basic framework for the purpose of marriage in Islam: building a family that is *sakinah*, *ma'waddah*, and *rahmah*. This shows that a spiritual approach is fundamental in shaping Islamic and harmonious communication patterns between husband and wife.



**Figure 1.** Coordination with Head of the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA)

The Muara Sipongi KUA also implements a participatory and reflective approach through simulations. For example, participants were asked to look in the mirror to become aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses, and to write information about their partners, such as their likes and habits, to improve understanding and empathy (Interview, May 20, 2025).

This simulation helps couples realize that a household isn't about perfection, but about complementing each other and accepting each other's flaws. This is also emphasized through the illustration of a "black dot on white paper," which depicts the importance of focusing on your partner's good qualities, not their flaws.

The counselor also stated that the core of the guidance is to encourage the prospective couple to eliminate selfishness and build open and supportive communication. The Islamic teaching of balance (*muwāzanah*) in rights and obligations is emphasized through Surah An-Nisa: 34, which outlines the husband's responsibility as the family leader and the wife's role as the guardian of household honor (Interview, May 20, 2025).

One interesting method used is the "river of life," which is a simulation of long-term household planning, the early years of marriage, the first 5 years, and 10 years up to old age and death in a state of *husnul khatimah* (Interview, May 20, 2025).

The purpose of this method is for couples to not only be ready for marriage, but also to live together for a long time with an otherworldly vision. Visual methods like "River of Life" are also used to help participants design long-term family planning, from marriage to old age, with the goal of a peaceful life in this world and the hereafter (Interview, May 20, 2025).



**Figure 2.** The penghulu conducts premarital counseling with the participants

The counselor also emphasized the importance of eliminating egoism as the key to successfully building healthy communication. This is associated with the meaning of trust from Allah SWT in Surah An-Nisa: 34. As the head of the family, the husband is responsible for protecting, caring for, providing for, and ensuring the well-being of the family. *Nusyuz* means a wife's disobedience, such as leaving the house without her husband's consent. (Kemenag, 2019). This verse is explained not as domination, but as a role arrangement that demands responsibility and mutual respect (Interview, May 20, 2025)

In an interview with a religious counselor from the Muara Sipongi KUA, it was stated that prospective brides and grooms often come from different cultural and customary backgrounds. This presents both potential and challenges in building harmonious family communication. One of the distinctive aspects that is an important consideration in the implementation of Marriage Guidance in Muara Sipongi is the influence of local culture, particularly the customs of "*sumando*" and "*manjujur*" that are prevalent in the Mandailing community and surrounding areas, especially among the *Ulu* tribe in Muara Sipongi.



**Figure 3.** The staff members of the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Muara Sipongi Subdistrict.



### **Sumando Custom**

The *sumando* marriage custom is performed when the groom is willing to live with the bride's family (Atikah, 2023). In the *Ulu* tribe custom, specifically in Muara Sipongi, "*sumando*" refers to the status of a husband who comes from outside his wife's clan, and is usually positioned as an "honored guest" (Nadya, 2023). This status has communication and relationship implications within the household. A husband is required to maintain proper etiquette in interactions with his wife's family, demonstrate humility, and respect the prevailing customary order (Salmahidayah, 2024).

This reflects a matrilineal system that requires husbands to communicate politely, be humble, and maintain harmony with the wife's extended family. This value aligns with the Islamic principle of *qaulan kariman*, which means noble speech, as well as *tawadhu'* (humility) as the character of a husband who respects the position of his wife and her family (Salmahidayah, 2024).

Islamic communication principles such as: *Qaulan karima* (noble speech), *Qaulan layyina* (gentle speech). And the virtue of modesty (*tawadhu'*) are highly relevant in guiding prospective husbands to understand their role as "*sumando*" who are not only heads of the household but must also be wise in adapting to their wife's social environment.

This is explained by the counselor: "*Two different natures, two different characters, brought together by God. So, what needs to be shed first is the ego...*" Thus, empathetic and adaptive communication becomes the key to the success of household relationships in traditional environments like Muara Sipongi (Interview, May 20, 2025).



**Figure 4.** Interview with customary leaders

### **Manjujur Custom**

The *manjujur* wedding custom is performed when the bride lives with the groom's family, and it is a custom of the Mandailing ethnic group (Nadya, 2023). The *manjujur* custom more accurately reflects the bride's transition into the groom's family structure, where women are bound by relationships that demand obedience



and respect (Atikah, 2023). However, in both systems, religious counselor emphasize the importance of complementary, not dominant, communication. As explained in Surah An-Nisa: 1 and Surah Ar-Rum: 21, husbands and wives are created from one soul and made partners to bring each other peace, not to dominate each other.

This tradition often leads to arguments because the groom's parents interfere with their daughter-in-law, or the groom's family dominates the wife's side, resulting in disharmony in the marriage. In this regard, the counselor stated that as a husband, one should continue to use kind words, in accordance with the principle of *Qaulan Ma'rufan* (good speech), speaking with full courtesy, avoiding harsh or hurtful words towards the wife, even when giving advice if the wife makes a mistake.

Also, a husband should speak to his wife with the principle of *Qaulan Sadiidan* (true and straight speech), so as not to worsen the atmosphere, even if the wife is involved in arguments with the husband's family. This will enable the husband to continue to protect his wife and maintain his marriage, without defending his family and being fair to his wife.

The tradition of *manjujur* is also a symbol of respect for women and the principles of equality within the family. In this context, women are respected within the family structure and are considered to hold a central position (Zanna, D, 2017), so communication within the household must be mutually respectful. In Surah An-Nisa: 1, it provides a strong basis that men and women have equal status before Allah and were created to complement each other, not to dominate.

The counselor emphasized the importance of accepting each other's shortcomings and strengths, which was reflected in simulations such as the "couple's sheet" and the "river of life." This approach is designed to create cultural and spiritual awareness that marital communication is not only functional, but must also align with cultural and religious principles.

In the social structure of Muara Sipongi, customary leaders (*hatobangon* in Mandailing and *ninik mamak* in Minangkabau) play an important role in maintaining family harmony and resolving marital conflicts (Interview, July 28, 2025). Their presence is highly respected in society because they are considered guardians of both cultural and moral values. In the context of premarital guidance at the Muara Sipongi KUA, the role of customary leaders is not direct in delivering the material, but rather complementary in providing cultural legitimacy. For instance, in customs such as *sumando* and *manjujur*, the advice and presence of customary figures are often invoked to strengthen the values of humility, respect, and responsibility in household communication (Interview, July 28, 2025). This corresponds to Islamic communication ethics such as *qaulan kariman* (noble speech) and *qaulan layyin* (gentle speech), which encourage respectful and empathetic interaction in family life. Previous studies have also underlined that customary leaders in Mandailing society are central figures in conflict resolution, especially in marriage-related issues (Afifa, Putra, Nurman, & Dewi, 2024; Zanna, 2017).

In order to examine the application of Islamic communication principles in premarital guidance, the researcher conducted interviews with 4 respondents who participated in the Marriage Guidance program organized by the Muara Sipongi KUA. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach. The aim is to delve deeply into participants' direct perceptions and experiences regarding how counselor deliver the material and how Islamic principles are internalized in their communication.

### ***Qaulan Balighan (Effective and Touching Speech)***

Second, *Qaulan Balighan* (effective speech), as mentioned in Surah An-Nisa' [4]: 63, is speech that touches the heart and is able to effectively influence the listener without being harsh or forceful (Ankhofiyya, N., et al., 2020). In the Tafsir Ibn Kathir, "qaulan balighan" means a statement that is reasonable and touches the heart, not merely rhetorical. This kind of communication is important in gently educating, building up, and guiding a partner, while also reaching their heart (Sarnoto, 2025).

One respondent shared their initial impression of the extension method as follows: *"At first, I thought it would be very formal, like just listening to a lecture. But it turned out the counselor was fun, their speaking style was relaxed but the content was deep."* This statement indicates that the material presented was not only informative but also touched the emotional and reflective sides of the participants. This is a manifestation of *qaulan balighan*, which means eloquent, targeted communication that touches the hearts of the audience (Surah An-Nisa: 63). The counselor used reflective methods such as household visioning, which allowed participants not only to understand cognitively but also to internalize spiritually.

### ***Qaulan Sadiidan (True and Honest Speech)***

*Qaulan Sadiidan* true and upright speech (correct words) as mentioned in Surah Al-Ahzab [33]: 70, according to Tafsir Al-Maraghi, *qaulan sadiidan* means truthful speech that does not distort the truth and offers solutions rather than exacerbating the situation. Shows that *qaulan sadiidan* in household communication is the basis for building trust between partners (Sarnoto, 2025).

The respondent stated: *"they say there's bound to be conflict in a household, and that's normal. But the important thing is that communication must be honest and trusting."* This reflects the application of *qaulan sadiidan* as commanded in QS. Al-Ahzab: 70. The counselor honestly presents the facts of family life, not only showcasing the ideal side but also acknowledging the existence of challenges. This shows that counselor are not merely setting expectations, but are building honesty as the foundation of couples' communication.

### ***Qaulan Kariman (Noble and Respectful Speech)***

*Qaulan Kariman* (noble speech), is found in Surah Al-Isra' [17]: 23, referring to the importance of using respectful and reverent language, especially towards parents, as a form of communication that conveys respect and affection (Quraish

Shihab, 2007). According to *Tafsir al-Qurthubi*, this reflects the importance of maintaining courtesy, even towards older people or couples who are in conflict. Communication within the household should also reflect honor and respect, not mere domination and selfishness (Rofiqi, I, et al., 2025).

In the interaction between the counselor and the participants, the respondents stated: *"Even though we have different backgrounds, the counselor remained polite and engaged us in fair conversations."* This statement reflects the application of *qaulan kariman*, which is a form of communication that upholds dignity and respect for others, regardless of social status (Surah Al-Isra: 23). The facilitator successfully created an equal learning environment that respected the dignity of each participant.

### ***Qaulan Layyinan (Soft and Soothing Speech)***

*Qaulan Layyinan* (gentle speech) is reflected in Surah Thaha [20]: 44, when Allah commanded Prophet Moses and Aaron to convey the message to Pharaoh with gentle words, demonstrating that Islam values communication ethics even towards harsh opponents (Maullasari, S, 2020). This is an example of how even to oppressors, communication must be done with gentleness. In husband-wife communication or between the KUA and participants in Guidance and Counseling, *qaulan layyinan* encourages open-hearted conversations and avoids conflict (Musthofa et al., 2020).

In response to the delivery of sensitive material, respondents stated: *"The counselor delivered it very gently. So it doesn't make you scared, but rather calms you down."* The principle of *qaulan layyinan* (QS. Taha: 44) teaches that even if the topic being discussed is difficult (such as conflict or divorce), communication must still be delivered gently and with full empathy. This is evident in the counselor's approach, which emphasizes awareness rather than intimidation.

### ***Qaulan Ma'rufan and Maysuuran (Good and Facilitating Speech)***

*Qaulan Ma'rufan* (good words), contained in Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 263, teaches the importance of speaking with full courtesy, avoiding harsh or hurtful words, even when giving advice or refusing help (Quraish Shihab, 2002). In the context of Islamic communication, *qaulan ma'rufan* serves as a reminder that every word should remain within the boundaries of norms, good manners, and social benefit (Khairuddin et al., 2023). And *Qaulan maysuuran* (easy and pleasant speech) in Surah Al-Isra' [17]: 28 emphasizes that even when speaking to those in need, one must remain polite and avoid hurting their feelings, even if we cannot provide material assistance (Musthofa et al., 2020). *Tafsir Ath-Thabari* interprets "*qaulan maysuuran*" as a light, non-painful statement that gives hope and comforts those in difficulty. In the context of guidance, this means that the counselor or partner must deliver criticism or feedback in a constructive, non-judgmental, and sincere manner (Musthofa et al., 2020).

In assessing the language used, respondents said: *"The language used is everyday language, and they don't judge us if we have personal questions."* This statement is

relevant to *qaulan ma'rufan* and *maysuuran*, which means words that are in accordance with good norms and are easily accepted (Surah Al-Baqarah: 235; Al-Isra: 28). The counselor avoids judgmental and difficult language for the participants, instead opening up space for questions and dialogue in an inclusive and constructive atmosphere. Thus, the principles of *qaulan* reflect a comprehensive Islamic communication ethic, teaching the community that every word should not only be effective in content but also beautiful in character. This principle is highly relevant in various contexts, ranging from family relationships and education to the workplace and religious propagation (Surasman & Ganiem, 2022; Sulaiman, Prayuda, & Lahmuddin, 2025; Burhanudin & Rojali, 2022).

Humans are beings who live not only in the physical world but also in the world of meaning. In the process of social interaction, humans do not simply act reflexively, but rather through symbolic meaning shaped by their experiences, culture, and values. This is the essence of Symbolic Interactionism theory, as stated by Herbert Blumer (1969), that social meaning is not inherent in objects or actions, but is interpreted through repeated and continuous interactions within social life. In the context of Islamic communication, the meaning of family, gender equality, and spiritual responsibility is shaped not only through normative teachings but also through a humanizing dialogical process. Communication, from this perspective, is not merely a technical process of conveying messages, but an encounter of values and experiences between individuals who learn from each other (Zhafirah, 2020.).

Previous research indicates that the Mandailing people have long engaged in a process of acculturation between custom and Islam, particularly in marriage practices. This is evident in the use of customary ceremonies such as the giving of dowry, customary advice, and the validation of marriage, which are never separate from references to the Islamic religion. In the social structure of Muara Sipongi, premarital counseling by the KUA serves as an important space for bringing together Islamic norms and local customs. This became a cultural strategy to ensure that Islamic principles were not imposed formalistically, but were internalized through the customary channels that had already been internalized by society (Daulay, 2022; Ritonga & Dongoran, 2023).

With such an approach, premarital guidance transcends its role as an administrative requirement and becomes a form of social and spiritual education deeply rooted in customary values. In KUA's implementation, this adat-based counseling demonstrates how Islamic communication ethics can be culturally integrated with traditions like *sumando* and *manjukur*, fostering families that are not only normatively Islamic but also socially and culturally resonant. Similar integrations are evident in the way *penghulu* facilitate premarital guidance at KUA Tanjung Morawa to foster *sakinah* family ideals (Risma & Ritonga, 2024), and in how the *Midodareni* tradition is used in Central Java to form family harmony through premarital counseling (Iswandari et al., 2024). Philosophical studies from Aceh

further confirm that marriage guidance serves as a bridge between Islamic law and the psychosocial resilience of families (Saleh et al., 2023).

**Table 1.** Brief Statements from 4 Brides-to-be Regarding the Integration of Islamic Communication Principles at the Muara Sipongi KUA

No	Name/Respondent	Qawlan Sadiidan	Qawlan Balighan	Qawlan Kariman	Qawlan Layyinan	Qawlan Ma'rufan & Maysuuran
1	R1 (Man)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	R2 (Woman)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	R3 (Man)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	R4 (Woman)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The research results indicate that the application of Islamic communication principles in premarital guidance at the Muara Sipongi KUA is not only understood theoretically by counselor, but is also truly felt to be beneficial by the prospective brides and grooms. As one respondent stated, "*The stories of household vision are very touching*," which shows that the messages delivered by the counselor were able to penetrate both the cognitive and affective domains of the participants simultaneously, aligning with the concept of *qaulan balighan*, which requires speech to be impactful and raise moral awareness. Furthermore, the statement "Never felt humiliated" affirms the application of *qaulan kariman*, which is the delivery of a message with full respect and dignity.

The findings of this study are relevant to the research of Rosmiati (2021), who emphasized the importance of interpersonal communication in premarital guidance. Rosmiati highlighted that the effectiveness of premarital guidance largely depends on the communication skills of counselors in delivering material to prospective brides and grooms. However, this study provides a new contribution by integrating Islamic communication principles such as *qaulan sadiidan*, *qaulan layyinan*, *qaulan kariman*, and *qaulan balighan* with the local cultural values of the Muara Sipongi community, particularly the *sumando* and *manjujur* traditions. This approach demonstrates that Islamic communication is not only understood normatively, but also internalized through socio-cultural practices that are deeply embedded in society (Rosmiati, 2021).

The evaluation stage indicated that there was a significant increase in the knowledge and awareness of the prospective couples after participating in the premarital guidance sessions. Prior to the program, several participants admitted that they had a limited understanding of the principles of Islamic communication, especially regarding the practical application of *qaulan sadiidan* (truthful speech) and *qaulan layyinan* (gentle speech) in daily marital interactions. However, during the

post-session interviews, participants were able to explain these concepts more clearly and even provided examples of how they planned to implement them in household communication, such as resolving conflicts through gentle dialogue rather than confrontation. Similarly, the counselors reported that the prospective couples showed higher engagement, asked more reflective questions, and demonstrated improved comprehension of the relationship between Islamic values and marital harmony. This finding supports previous studies which highlighted that structured premarital guidance has a positive impact on the cognitive and emotional readiness of couples entering marriage (Utari, Fitriyani, & Nurdin, 2022; Nugraheni, Hidayati, & Putri, 2023)

In addition, this study is in line with the findings of Iit, Syarifah, and Fitriyani (2024), who emphasized the need for a holistic approach in premarital guidance that includes spiritual, emotional, financial, and communication dimensions. While their study highlighted the conceptual framework of premarital education, this research provides empirical evidence that the integration of Islamic values with local wisdom can strengthen the understanding and readiness of prospective couples in building a harmonious family (*sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah*). Thus, this study not only enriches previous research but also offers novelty by presenting a model of premarital guidance that integrates religious principles with cultural traditions, which may serve as a reference for KUAs in other regions with diverse socio-cultural contexts (Iit, Syarifah, & Fitriyani, 2024).

From the overall interview results, it was identified that the integration of Islamic communication principles such as *qaulan sadiidan* (honest and upright speech), *qaulan layyinan* (gentle speech), *qaulan balighan* (effective and touching speech), *qaulan kariman* (noble and respectful speech), as well as *qaulan ma'rufan* and *maysuuran* (good and facilitating speech), has created a dialogical and humanistic guidance atmosphere. Participants not only passively receive material but are emotionally engaged and feel valued, making these Islamic communication principles demonstrably serve as the foundation for moral learning relevant to the local customs in Muara Sipongi. This finding reinforces that the Islamic communication approach is not only a normative value, but also effective and applicable in preparing couples for married life.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of Islamic communication principles *qaulan sadiidan*, *qaulan layyinan*, *qaulan kariman*, and *qaulan balighan* with local cultural traditions such as *sumando* and *manjukur* provides a more contextual and effective model of premarital guidance at the Muara Sipongi Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). The findings demonstrate that participants not only improved their knowledge and awareness of Islamic communication but also showed readiness to apply these values in family life. The novelty of this research lies in the combination of religious values and cultural wisdom, which enriches premarital guidance beyond



a normative framework and offers a practical approach adaptable to diverse socio-cultural settings. Strengthening such integration can contribute to preparing couples for harmonious marriages and resilient families. Future programs of premarital counseling are recommended to maintain collaboration between KUA officials, counselors, and community stakeholders to ensure that Islamic values continue to be conveyed in ways that are culturally relevant and easily understood by society.

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