

The role of religious communication in North Sumatra's governmental institutions

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Abstract This study aims to examine how the Department of Youth and Sports in North Sumatra utilises religious communication to enhance the well-being of young individuals. It contributes to scholarly knowledge by shedding light on the strategies employed by the Department to improve youth quality through Islamic communication. The study employs field methodologies and applies Miles and Huberman's data analysis model. The findings are divided into three key dimensions: 1) Planning Islamic Communication: Analysing the Department's Strategies for Effective Communication in an Islamic Context; 2) Organising and Implementing Islamic Communication: Investigating the Department's Efforts in Organising and Executing Islamic Communication Initiatives Targeting North Sumatra's Youth; and 3) Monitoring and Evaluating Islamic Communication: Assessing the Department's Systematic Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Islamic Communication Strategies in Youth Engagement. Additionally, this study encounters challenges related to technology and semantics. Semantic difficulties arise from varying interpretations and analyses of Islamic communication messages among the youth population, while technical obstacles include concerns regarding infrastructure deficiencies and resource constraints.

Keywords: communication management; governmental institutions; religious studies

INTRODUCTION

In North Sumatra, the youth population, particularly Muslim youth, holds numerical significance, with approximately 10.06 million individuals, or 66.3% of the population, adhering to Islam as their religious belief (Furoidah, 2023; Suaidah et al., 2023). According to Indonesian law, youth are defined as "Indonesian citizens aged between 16 and 30 years who are in a critical period of growth and development." However, the specific age limit for youth may vary. Data from the Central Statistics Agency of North Sumatra Province indicates that approximately 5 million individuals in the region fall within the productive age range and are considered youth (Medan, 2021).

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Given the predominantly Muslim population in the region, it is reasonable to assume that Muslim youth constitute the largest demographic group. While precise figures are unavailable, research on Muslim youth often concentrates on institutions dedicated to Islamic youth, such as Mosque Youth, autonomous Islamic organisations, or youth wing organisations (Karima, Ramadhani, & Nasution, 2021).

The strategic issues concerning youth development in North Sumatra, as indicated by the author's preliminary research and early data, revolve around increasing youth participation and their active involvement in areas such as skill development, entrepreneurship, independence, leadership, and contributing to the nation's development while grounded in faith and piety. These issues have gained significant prominence over the past decade (Ilhamsyah & Mitra, 2022).

At the provincial level, the Department of Youth and Sports of the Province (Dispora), under the governance of the Governor, is responsible for youth-related matters within the government's organisational structure. Youth-focused services encompass several components, including raising youth awareness, empowering them, and fostering their development. The implementation of these services may vary from one province to another. In North Sumatra Province, youth development services encompass diverse aspects that aim to prepare the younger generation comprehensively from an early age (Rahmat, Nastia, & Wijaya, 2022).

Youth services are closely intertwined with organisational communication, which plays a pivotal role in various critical aspects. Organisational communication entails the exchange of information within both formal and informal groups within an organisation. The organisation sanctions formal communication and serves its interests, covering aspects like organisational functioning, productivity, and task assignments. This includes memos, policies, statements, press releases, and official correspondence (Samsudin, Nurhalizah, & Fadilah, 2022).

Organisational communication holds excellent significance in nurturing religious devotion and promoting interfaith tolerance among young individuals. In today's diverse society, young people must have a profound understanding of and respect for different religious beliefs and practices. Effective communication within various organisational contexts, including educational institutions, universities, youth organisations, and religious groups, can facilitate this understanding. Young individuals can better understand different religions through open debates, interactive discussions, workshops, or seminars focusing on various faiths and their teachings. This process is vital for their spiritual growth and for fostering an atmosphere of mutual tolerance.

Furthermore, organisational communication plays a pivotal role in addressing and rectifying misconceptions and prejudices that often contribute to the emergence of intolerance. Organisations can actively contribute to dispelling misconceptions and misrepresentations surrounding specific religious beliefs by fostering an environment that

encourages open dialogues on religion within their structures. This approach not only promotes tolerance but also empowers young individuals to critically assess and question any biased perspectives they may encounter in their daily lives. Moreover, by promoting interfaith dialogues or collaborations centred around common goals or community service initiatives, these organisations provide concrete opportunities for young people to directly witness the importance of embracing diversity, thereby reinforcing their religious convictions and commitment to fostering interfaith acceptance.

However, youth in North Sumatra encounter several challenges and obstacles in their journey towards realising their potential. One of these challenges is limited access to quality education. Many young people in this region face difficulties in obtaining sufficient education, both formal and religious, which can impede their intellectual, moral, and skills development (Gaol, Batubara, & Lubis, 2022).

Additionally, the dearth of employment opportunities is a significant concern for the youth in North Sumatra. Elevated levels of youth unemployment can hinder economic growth and their ability to be self-reliant. The scarcity of decent job prospects makes young individuals susceptible to poverty and dependence on government support (Sagala, Badaruddin, & Purwoko, 2022).

Apart from economic factors, the youth in North Sumatra also grapple with challenges stemming from their social and cultural environments. Technological advancements and globalisation substantially influence young people, particularly regarding lifestyle, behaviour, and worldviews. There is apprehension that foreign cultures, which may not align with Islamic values and local traditions, could impact the youth in this region.

In this context, the Department of Youth and Sports plays a pivotal role in assisting young individuals in overcoming these challenges and barriers. Islamic communication management is relevant to nurturing quality youth in North Sumatra. Islamic communication management involves the application of communication principles rooted in Islamic values, such as honesty, justice, and courtesy. This approach has the potential to mould young individuals with strong moral values, high integrity, and effective communication skills (Sinaga, 2017).

Quality youth are defined as young individuals possessing commendable qualities and competencies. They exhibit several characteristics that distinguish them as outstanding individuals capable of positively contributing to society. Some of these traits include having extensive and current knowledge, effective communication abilities, a positive and optimistic outlook, leadership qualities, maintaining physical and mental well-being, teamwork proficiency, upholding ethical and moral values, and having well-defined life objectives (Karmiza, 2019).

Moreover, quality youth demonstrate leadership skills that enable them to inspire and lead others effectively. They are adept at working collaboratively in teams, listening attentively, and achieving mutually beneficial agreements. Quality youth also recognise the importance of maintaining physical and mental health by adopting a healthy lifestyle and managing emotional equilibrium (Prapnuwanti, 2021).

Significant distinctions become apparent when comparing the role of organisational communication between Indonesia and its closest neighbour, Malaysia. Examining communication patterns among Muslim adolescents in Malaysia and Indonesia provides a fascinating exploration of cultural nuances, religious comprehension, and societal complexities (Zainal, 2019). Both countries boast substantial Muslim populations, with Islam playing a considerable role in shaping societal norms and values. Nonetheless, the expression of religious identity among young Muslims and their participation in interfaith discourse differ considerably in these two nations due to variations in historical, socio-political, and cultural contexts (Abd Rahman et al., 2021; Muzaffar, 2021).

In the Malaysian context, it is evident that Muslim youths tend to lean towards conservatism when it comes to outwardly expressing their religious beliefs (Furoidah, 2023; Zainal, 2019). This prevailing conservatism in the country is largely influenced by the political landscape, where the national identity is closely intertwined with Islam. Consequently, religious discussions among Malaysian Muslim teenagers often revolve around adherence to established norms and preserving communal unity. Organisational communication within youth groups or educational institutions primarily aims to reinforce Islamic teachings while fostering a culture of respect for other religious beliefs in the diverse Malaysian society (Muzaffar, 2021).

In contrast, Indonesian Muslim youth exhibit broader perspectives when articulating their religious convictions. Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population, has a historical background marked by pluralism, where multiple interpretations of Islam coexist harmoniously with other religious traditions (Alamsyah & Hadiz, 2017; Hasan, 2012). The heterogeneous environment in which Indonesian Muslim millennials find themselves creates a conducive atmosphere for open and constructive discussions about religion. These discussions often involve debates and dialogues exploring various facets of Islamic teachings and challenging established conventions (Weng, 2018).

However, despite these differences, a commonality is shared between Malaysian and Indonesian Muslim youth in using digital media for religious communication (Afrianty, 2012; Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2018; Weng, 2018). Social media has emerged as a vital tool for individuals, allowing them to acquire knowledge about Islamic teachings and connect with like-minded individuals or engage in more extensive discussions regarding their religious convictions (Winarti, 2017).

Furthermore, both groups of young individuals are increasingly involved in interfaith initiatives to promote tolerance and understanding among diverse religious communities. This demonstrates their shared commitment to peaceful coexistence despite their differing ways of expressing their religious beliefs. The communication patterns of Malaysian and Indonesian Muslim youths in relation to religion display noticeable differences, primarily influenced by their respective cultural contexts rather than inherent disparities in their values or beliefs. This observation highlights the existence of variations even within religious communities that share a common faith.

Moral and ethical values are also central to the concept of quality youth. They possess high integrity, consistently acting with honesty, fairness, and responsibility in all aspects of their lives. Additionally, quality youth have well-defined life goals and a strong determination to work diligently and persevere in achieving those objectives.

In summary, quality youth have competence, a positive outlook, strong moral values, and clear life goals. They have the potential to become future leaders who bring about positive changes in society. Therefore, it is essential to provide support and opportunities for youth to develop themselves and fully realise their potential (Destiniar, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a field research approach, which involves confirming research findings by analysing data collected (Creswell, 2019). The primary objective of this study is to conduct an in-depth examination of the Department of Youth and Sports Islamic communication management in its efforts to promote the development of quality youth in North Sumatra Province. In accordance with this research approach, qualitative data is employed. As Miles and Huberman described, qualitative data is a source for comprehensive and well-grounded descriptions, offering insights into processes occurring within a specific context (Sugiyono, 2017).

The research is carried out at the provincial government level, specifically focusing on the Department of Youth and Sports in North Sumatra Province. Informants for this research encompass key figures within the Department, including the Head of the Department, the Secretary, the Head of the Sports Achievement Improvement Division, and the Heads of Subdivisions within the Youth and Scouting Services Department, which are the recipients of the Youth Quality Strengthening Program. The research employs data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, document analysis, and literature review to ensure data accuracy.

In this research, data analysis adheres to the Miles and Huberman model, which involves conducting qualitative data analysis activities interactively and continuously until data saturation is achieved, signifying that comprehensive data has been obtained. These data analysis activities encompass data reduction, data presentation, and

drawing/verifying conclusions. To enhance data validity in this study, methods like triangulation, record-keeping, and providing rich, detailed descriptions are utilised (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Process of Islamic Communication Planning in the Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra Province

Planning and management share a strong interconnection in pursuing an organisation's objectives. Planning encompasses the establishment of goals and the formulation of strategies to attain them. In contrast, management revolves around efficiently allocating and overseeing resources and activities required to realise these goals. In the case of the Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra (Disporasu), both these concepts harmoniously collaborate to establish a unified framework for overseeing youth and sports-related initiatives. A detailed representation of this process is illustrated in Figure 1.

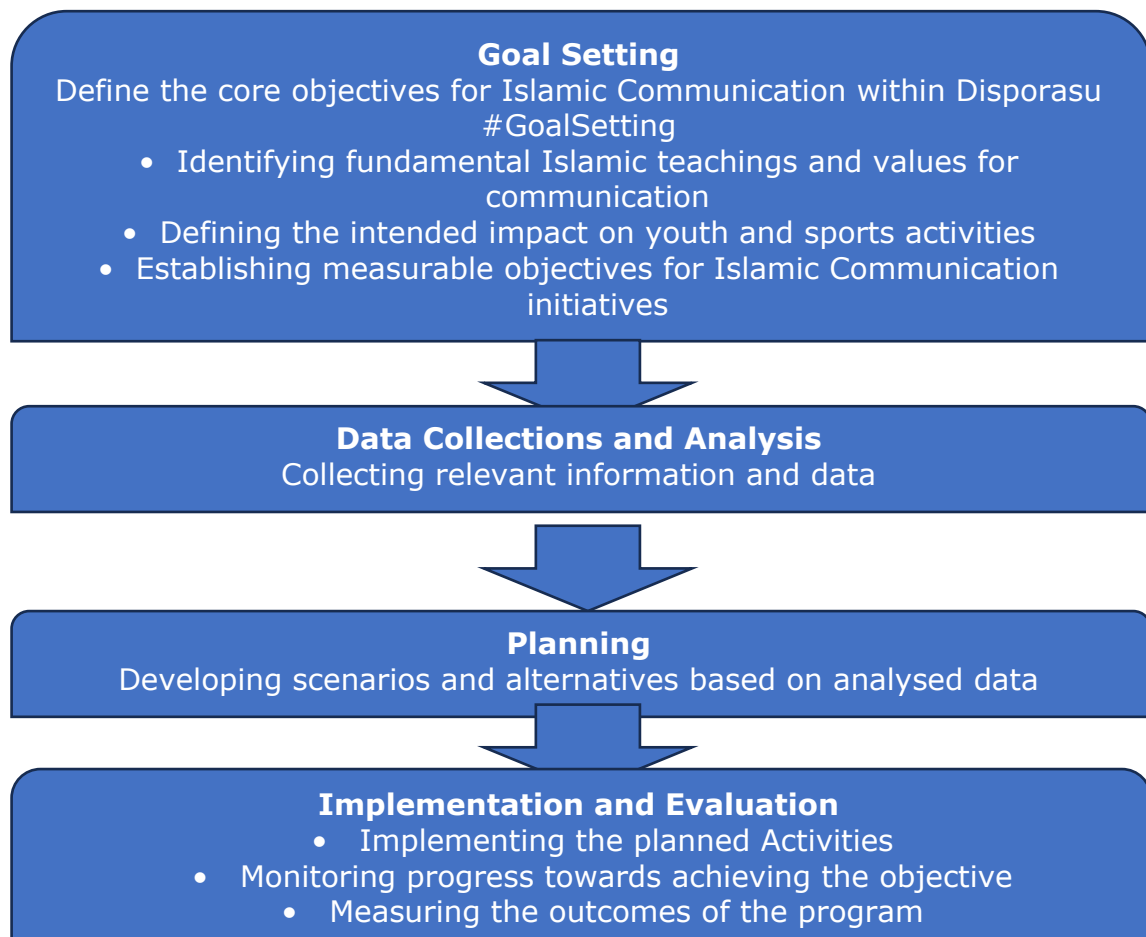


Figure 1. Flowcharts Depicting the Planning Process
Source: Author (2023)

Communication holds a vital role within Disporasu, involving the exchange of messages and information among relevant stakeholders. Effective communication is imperative in Disporasu's planning and

management processes to ensure that information is conveyed clearly and accurately to all parties involved (Razak & Sumanti, 2023).

Planning within Disporasu is a systematic procedure involving gathering and analysing pertinent data, leading to the formulation of various plans and scenarios for the future of youth and sports activities in North Sumatra. In this planning phase, available information and data are utilised to identify potential developments, anticipate expected outcomes, and chart necessary strategic steps (Nugraha, 2022).

By combining meticulous planning with effective communication, Disporasu (Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra) can enhance the efficient allocation of resources, optimise youth and sports activities, and achieve their established objectives. The planning process in Disporasu encompasses collecting and interpreting relevant information to comprehend the conditions and factors influencing youth and sports activities in the Sumatra Utara region. Building upon this comprehension, planning generates diverse scenarios and alternatives to address future possibilities. This empowers Disporasu to make well-informed decisions and devise appropriate strategies for goal attainment.

In the context of Disporasu, communication planning entails the creation of written documents outlining the methods and guidelines for communication activities essential to achieving specific objectives. Communication planning in Disporasu aims to identify the most effective and efficient approach for accomplishing these goals. This encompasses the selection of appropriate communication tools, determination of required timeframes, and methods for evaluating the ultimate outcomes of youth and sports programs (Erlina, 2018).

The planning process within Disporasu serves as a roadmap for the Department's future actions. Through this planning process, Disporasu identifies the necessary steps to achieve their goals most effectively and efficiently. This enables Disporasu to understand their objectives and plan their efforts accordingly clearly. Consequently, Disporasu can delineate specific actions to take, allocate required resources, and determine the most suitable methods and strategies for achieving their established goals. The planning process provides Disporasu with a clear direction, helps identify priorities, prevents confusion, and optimises the utilisation of available resources in managing youth and sports activities in North Sumatra.

Communication planning offers organisations or individuals a structured framework for their communication activities. This planning document may encompass communication strategies, target audiences, message content, communication channels, resource allocation, implementation timelines, and evaluation criteria to gauge the effectiveness of communication programs. Therefore, communication planning ensures that communication activities are conducted systematically and directly, enabling the achievement of established goals effectively and efficiently.

The planning process involves various stages, including goal setting, standard establishment, procedure and method determination, plan creation, and anticipation of expected outcomes. It is a managerial process in which objectives are identified, and the necessary steps to attain them are formulated. Managers define the desired work results through planning and identify the strategies required to attain them (Ropik, 2017).

In Disporasu, Islamic communication holds significance as it focuses on conveying Islamic teachings, values, and the rhetorical aspects of communication. The messages conveyed through Islamic communication encompass various facets of Islamic teachings, including faith (aqidah), Islamic laws (shariah), and ethical and moral principles (propriety). These Islamic messages are commonly referred to as "dakwah."

In Disporasu's planning, it is crucial to explore the integration of Islamic messages into communication strategies for youth and sports participants in North Sumatra. Communication planning in this context should encompass effective and accurate methods for conveying Islamic messages. The planning process must carefully consider communication approaches that align with Islamic values, ensuring that the intended audience's conveyed dakwah is well-received and comprehended.

By incorporating appropriate Islamic communication into their planning, Disporasu can enhance the effectiveness of their dakwah initiatives. Effective communication will facilitate the dissemination of Islamic values, foster a shared understanding among youth and sports participants, and contribute to character development through the teachings of Islam. Consequently, Disporasu can successfully implement youth and sports activities in North Sumatra while upholding strong Islamic principles.

The Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra Province is pivotal in fostering harmonious relationships with the community and bolstering the institution's public image. This objective aims to cultivate community understanding, trust, and support, particularly within youth engagement. The responsibilities of the Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra Province encompass active participation in government programs designed to achieve specific objectives, particularly in the domain of youth development.

The Islamic communication planning undertaken by Dispora North Sumatra entails assigning tasks, allocating resources, and coordinating activities for individuals and groups. Within this planning function, specific tasks are designated to each party, organisational structures are established, authority and responsibility are delegated and defined, and communication systems are put in place. Additionally, planning strives to orchestrate the collaborative efforts of each team member in a cohesive and organised manner, with the ultimate aim of achieving effective Islamic communication (Hakim & Fadila, 2022).

The flow of Islamic communication planning within the Department of Youth and Sports may exhibit variations based on the institution's policies and programmes. However, it is evident that planning commences with the Regional Long-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) while also taking into account the Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN).

Organisation and Implementation of Islamic Communication Management in the Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra Province

In communication management, overseeing and facilitating effective communication across all aspects is vital. This encompasses using suitable communication channels, scheduling meetings, employing appropriate communication technologies, and adhering to the principles of effective communication. Through effective communication management, organisations can ensure seamless information dissemination, foster efficient collaboration, and cultivate strong relationships with stakeholders (Ruslan, 2016).

Islamic communication management within the Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra pertains to how they communicate with young individuals and athletes, grounded in Islamic religious values. This involves incorporating Islamic messages into their communication, providing religious instruction to youth and athletes, and applying Islamic principles in activity management. Additionally, they encourage active participation among youth and athletes while conducting regular assessments. These endeavours are geared towards enhancing communication with youth and athletes, promoting Islamic values, and facilitating the holistic development of young individuals within society.

The regulations established by Dispora North Sumatra function as guidelines for youth in their conduct of activities. The presence of clear and mutually agreed-upon regulations aims to mitigate conflicts or violations that could prove detrimental to both individuals and organisations.

One of the strategies employed by the Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra to motivate youth participation in training and guidance activities is imparting education on the importance of unity in diversity. The Department's objective in organising these training and guidance activities is to equip youth with the skills for harmonious coexistence within a diverse framework, ultimately fostering greater tolerance in North Sumatra.

Islamic communication, initiated through educational initiatives by the Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra, aims to prepare young individuals for active participation in training and guidance activities. This commitment is reflected in the substantial youth turnout at every training and guidance session organised by the

Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra, with participants actively engaging in these training programmes.

In this context, the Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra plays a pivotal role as both a facilitator and coordinator of training and guidance activities. By consistently enhancing the quality of education and offering programmes tailored to the needs of young individuals, the Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra can continue to contribute positively to youth character development and their commitment to Islamic values.

Through effective Islamic communication and the provision of high-quality guidance and training, there is an aspiration for young individuals to evolve into a generation distinguished not only by their knowledge and skills but also by their robust moral and spiritual integrity.

Efficient communication, under the leadership of the Head of Dispora North Sumatra, conveys rules and regulations to youth members and organisations. Effective communication ensures that all parties comprehend and adhere to the established regulations. Furthermore, through open and transparent communication channels, youth members and organisations can seek clarification or provide feedback regarding the existing regulations (Siregar & Sazali, 2022).

Through implementing behavioural control via Islamic communication management, the goal is to foster a harmonious and disciplined atmosphere within youth organisations in North Sumatra. This approach aims to maintain order, prevent conflicts, and ensure that youth activities align with the values and objectives envisioned by Dispora North Sumatra.

It only fits for Dispora North Sumatra to foster cooperation and solidarity, focusing on fostering a spirit of collaboration with the community, religious institutions, and other community organisations to advance the welfare of all collectively. Youth organisations play a central role in this endeavour. Islamic communication serves as a vehicle for constructive dialogue, promoting harmonious relationships with the people of North Sumatra and, of course, encompasses the roles of each organisation. Applying these principles can contribute to creating an Islamic work environment within government agencies and foster high-quality, equitable, and effective communication in the execution of public service duties.

The collaboration between Dispora North Sumatra and youth organisations can yield mutual benefits in developing and empowering youth in North Sumatra. The involvement of youth organisations in North Sumatra represents a form of discussion or dialogue, leading to joint programmes, information exchange, and the planning of more effective collaborations.

To ensure that Community and Youth Organisations maintain effective organisational management, it is imperative to provide ongoing training for these entities. This training aims to enhance the capacities

of organisation leaders in effectively managing their respective entities. Tailored training programmes are designed to augment technical knowledge and skills in organisation management, aiming to foster the establishment of modern and critical youth organisations.

Organisation and Implementation of Islamic Communication Management in the Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra Province

Within the organisational context, monitoring plays a crucial role in assessing the effectiveness of implemented programmes. Its purpose is to gauge the extent to which programmes attain their defined objectives and measurable indicators of success. A wide array of information is gathered through monitoring to foster an understanding of the organisation and its operational milieu. This facilitates the systematic monitoring of programme performance and the broader development of the organisation.

These activities are carried out internally to assess the efficient utilisation of resources, ascertain the extent to which activities adhere to the planned framework, and ensure that the outcomes align with the intended objectives. By consistently collecting data and scrutinising information, organisations can track the progress of programmes and pinpoint any deficiencies or adjustments required to meet organisational goals effectively.

In this approach, the monitoring team conducts direct site visits to locations where programmes or activities are executed. They oversee processes, assess progress, and evaluate the outcomes achieved. These field visits offer a firsthand perspective of the on-site situation and provide an opportunity for engagement with programme implementers.

This approach entails the gathering and scrutiny of progress reports submitted by the units responsible for programmes. These reports encompass data regarding the utilisation of funds, both target and actual percentages, and the progress achieved in activities, expressed as percentages of the targets. By reviewing these progress reports, the monitoring team can assess programme developments in written form and ascertain whether the programme adheres to the planned trajectory and attains the anticipated outcomes.

The monitoring and evaluation of Islamic communication management at Dispora North Sumatra serve as a point of reference, reflecting the aspirations of all stakeholders engaged in the planning and managing of various essential work programmes. It also encourages valuable input from individuals involved in the organisational structure.

Consequently, following the fulfilment of all elements in both organisation and implementation, evaluation and monitoring become imperative. Periodic assessments are conducted on the activities and effectiveness of Islamic communication that has been implemented. Monitoring involves collecting responses and feedback from youth regarding the messages conveyed and communication channels.

As a result, the evaluation outcomes guide future improvements and enhancements in Islamic communication. There is an expectation of continuous development in religious understanding and Islamic communication skills among the responsible team. By actively involving Muslim youth in Dispora North Sumatra, Dispora can reinforce Islamic communication and propagate religious values within youth and sports activities in the province (Hermawan & Sari, 2023).

To attain the envisioned success of Islamic communication within the Monitoring and Evaluation of Management at Dispora North Sumatra Province, the evaluation and monitoring processes are indispensable. These measures are designed to ensure the realisation of the goals of Islamic communication according to the predetermined plan and expectations. Evaluation and monitoring, though distinct, are intricately linked facets that cannot be disentangled.

After the execution of activities, the Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra compiles a comprehensive report or activity accountability, which includes relevant documents about the conducted activities. The report is generated post-training, providing a detailed account of the activity. As articulated by a Young Policy Analyst at the Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra, "The activity report and accountability constitute the conclusive output of the training activities conducted by the Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra, serving as the final report or accountability for the training endeavours directed towards youth in North Sumatra."

Moreover, the report encompasses documentation related to the activities that have transpired. Such documentation may encompass participant lists, activity schedules, presentation materials, photographic or video records, participant certificates, and other pertinent records linked to the activities. Activity accountability is also an integral component of the report, encompassing details concerning budget utilisation, incurred expenses, and financial records connected to the activity. This accountability serves the purpose of ensuring transparency and responsible financial management in the execution of the activity.

The activity report or accountability serves a pivotal role as an evaluation and feedback mechanism for the Department of Youth and Sports of North Sumatra in the planning and execution of future activities. Furthermore, the report can also serve as a reference for securing support and funding from relevant stakeholders for forthcoming activities (Kurniati, Munir, Hamidah, & Rizky, 2020).

CONCLUSION

In the communication planning of the Department of Youth and Sports in North Sumatra, Islamic communication principles, known as "Qaulan Baliqh," hold significant importance. This term refers to the use of effective and efficient speech. The planning process involves the careful creation of a work plan, the allocation of human resources, and the facilitation of collaboration across various sectors. The overarching goal

is establishing a cohesive operational framework that aligns with advancing high-quality youth development. The principles of "qaulan sadid" form the basis for organising and implementing Islamic communication management within the Department of Youth and Sports in North Sumatra Province, particularly in managing top-notch youth programs. This underscores the importance of accurate information and adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs).

To promote the dissemination of Islamic principles within youth organisations, implementing Islamic communication management includes providing training that incorporates Islamic communication ideals, encourages the active participation of young individuals, and integrates Islamic messaging into their communication practices. The Department of Youth and Sports in North Sumatra Province monitors and evaluates activities per Islamic communication principles, specifically "Qawlan ma'rufa" (good and appropriate speech). These activities aim to ensure the effective conveyance of Islamic messages to the intended audience, achieve desired outcomes, and positively impact youth and society. Through comprehensive evaluation and diligent monitoring, it is possible to ensure that youth and sports activities adhere to Islamic principles and the organisation's objectives.

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